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Eva Gabor

ORCHIDS AND SALAMI

In this gay and impudent memoir, the youngest of the fabulously beautiful *Gabor sisters* takes the reader on a highly amusing trip behind the Mink Curtain.

Miss Gabor has decided that it is high time to puncture some of the hot-air bubbles that have been bobbing rosily around her lovely head ever since she and *Glamour* discovered each other, and she now tells the story of her almost larger-than-life career with great humour and sense of style.

Her book simply bristles with wit and wisecracks. Typical is this one: "The major thing that divides the European male from the American male is the Atlantic Ocean". It is refreshing to find an author who is not afraid to poke fun at herself, but underlying the light-hearted banter is a rich vein of worldly wisdom.

Whether writing about her sister Zsa Zsa, about cooking, about Hollywood, about the men in her life, about television or about women—to name but a few of the subjects on which she touches—she never fails to entertain. This is indeed a very attractive and individual autobiography.

ORCHIDS AND SALAMI



Photo: Philip Nea

THE GABOR SISTERS
Zsa Zsa, Magda, Eva

Eva Gabor

ORCHIDS
AND
SALAMI



W. H. ALIEN
LONDON

1954

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TO ALL MY FRIENDS
And One in Particular

Foreword

UNTIL THE SUMMER of 1953 I was under the impression that the Gabors were a tribe of nomadic women from the plains of central Hungary who, a decade or so before, had swarmed across the Atlantic and taken possession of the better night clubs and the newspaper columns of New York and Hollywood. I learned of my error, however, by becoming acquainted with the youngest member of the family, Eva Gabor, under the following circumstances which could happen nowhere except in this country.

In a moment of mental aberration I had suggested that in my spare time (of which I have none) I would like to make an American version of an English play, which had been translated into French, about a mermaid whose nationality was Spanish. My friend, who owned both the play and a theater on Cape Cod, suggested that this Spanish mermaid should obviously be played by a Hungarian actress. This seemed to

make as much sense as most proceedings on Broadway; so I agreed and proceeded to prepare my American version from this international potpourri.

In due course I was introduced to the beautiful Eva Gabor and found her to be an enchanting choice for the mermaid, Marina. I do not know any mermaids personally, but I am sure that they must be distantly related to the Gabors—possibly a submerged branch of the family—for I found that Eva had almost every qualification for the part, except that she had two legs and was no great shakes as a swimmer.

During rehearsals I discovered Eva to be possessed of the peculiar insanity which, coupled with talent and determination, is an essential part of the character of every successful actor and actress. This included the capacity to work day and night at her part, to take infinite pains and, in her case, to accompany her most serious efforts with an infectious gaiety which captivated the rest of the cast, the director, and the author. Indeed, so complete was her concentration in her work that, after two weeks of rehearsal, the rest of us were exhausted by our efforts to keep up with her. "Where," I asked myself, "is the legendary lady of the night life of two continents? Certainly not in this determined young creature animated by but one absorbing passion—to create the role of Marina with real artistry!" Then, on the opening night at Dennis, my worst suspicions were confirmed. "This is no mythical, legendary creature," I remarked, "but a damned good actress." The

audiences and critics, both at Dennis and Westport, agreed with my conclusions.

All good actresses undoubtedly go to heaven, but before they do, they write their memoirs. Some write them when they are old; others while they are young. The latter have the advantage that every ten years or so they can publish additional volumes. In the case of Eva, I hope there will be more to come.

In an early chapter of this merry book, you will meet Florence Enright, who first taught Eva how to act. In the dark ages, in an institution known as the Washington Square Players at the Bandbox Theater, of which I was one of the founders, this same Florence Enright appeared in several plays. She has since enriched the American theater by instructing many talented young people in the art of acting. In the case of Eva, as this book indicates, in the midst of a life kaleidoscopically divided between motion pictures, television, radio, magazine covers, matrimony, and mansions on Fifth Avenue, one thread of insanity is clearly apparent—the divine madness which makes her choose the living theater with all its highlights and heartaches for her life's work. I wish her well.

LAWRENCE LANGNER

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ORCHIDS AND SALAMI

Grandfather Was Right

I
I**N**'**B****U****D****A****P****E****S****T**, when I was a child of three and a half, my wise old grandfather once took me on his knee and whispered, "Eva, you will grow up to marry a tall blond man who will take you to America." Grandfather warned that after I arrived newspapers would write about me and my sisters, and I would be bared on the sports page in the middle of the baseball season. He was also the first Middle European to predict that the Boston Braves would sell their franchise to Milwaukee in the year 1953. Grandfather's predictions were positively uncanny for a man who had never been out of Budapest.

My wise old grandfather was always taking me on his knee to give me advice when my wise old grandmother was not around. Grandpapa molded all my thinking, such as it was. I remember later when I, a child of seven, presented him with a little birthday gift accompanied by a sweet speech. He cleared his throat,

danced a few steps from a czardas, then looked for Grandmama and, seeing that she was out of earshot, whispered, "Eva, my little honey drop, thank you for the sweet speech. But as you go through life I would like you to remember one lesson."

"What is it, Grandpapa?" I inquired in my sultriest tones and without a trace of accent.

"Sweet girls are a dime a dozen," he replied. Then he was thoughtful for a moment, and his eyes filled with dreams. "Once," he reminisced, "once I knew a winsome beauty named Maria. She had great talent and a sweetness that suffused her and suffocated others." I could see in the tender lines around Grandpapa's mouth that he was unlocking one of the secret places in his heart, one of the places where Grandmama never pattered about, fussing with the anti-macassars. "Do you know," he added reflectively, "Maria was the biggest bore in Christendom, a place where the competition is keen. Gad, how she wanted me!" he drooled.

Although Grandmama had warned me against it, I came closer. Grandpapa placed me in my accustomed spot upon his knee. "And do you know where Maria is today?" he asked.

"Maria is Grandmama!" I cried, my eyes watering.

Grandpapa then gave me a look of such profound disgust that I have never been able to forget it. "No," he said wearily. "Today Maria is married to a wife-beater, and she smiles demurely, purring a bit from time to time, as he throws bric-a-brac her way."

Grandpapa did not dispense advice for the sake of hearing himself talk. He was preparing me for my life in America, where he predicted I would go. At times I asked him what kind of life this would be. I recall his saying to me once, after an encouraging squeeze, "My child, you will have to learn to live with agents and publicity men. But it can be done. The human body is amazingly tough."

When he noticed my slight shudder he cried, "Courage! Remember the rewards!" Then he looked me straight in the eye and asked, "Do you know what a guppy is?"

"No, Grandpapa."

"A guppy," he explained, "is a small fish which people keep in fishbowls. Life in a fishbowl is fine for guppies. They are highly emotional creatures whose passions lead them to multiply in public. It is useless to tell a guppy to take a cold shower instead. Now then!" He paused dramatically. "In America, my little Eva, you will live your life in a fishbowl, surrounded by hungry-eyed people waiting for a peek at your private life. As you swim about, others will describe your activities in print. These reports will be highly inaccurate, and every now and then you will feel like shrieking. Subdue the impulse. Remember that you are not supposed to care what is written about you as long as you are written about."

"But, Grandpapa," I whimpered, "I do care! And I don't want to live in a fishbowl."

Grandpapa shook his head sadly. "This is out of

your hands, my child," he murmured. "It is written in the goulash."

"Kismet!" I cried in fluent Magyar.

"Remember, Eva, if things ever get too difficult in the fishbowl you can always write a book."

"Will writing a book make life easier in the fishbowl, Grandpapa?"

Grandpapa thought for a moment. "No," he finally replied. "But it will make you feel better."

"And what shall I call my book?"

"Orchids and Salami," he replied without hesitation.

"But why?"

"We will find a reason," he promised.

Then, hearing Grandmama's approaching footsteps, he crawled under the couch.

Complaint Department

GRANDPAPA FAILED to tell me that I would bring out all that is explosive in the English language. I have been called a "bombshell," "dynamite," "blonde fission," "radioactive," and "the girl who broke the Geiger counter." This is all very well if somewhere inside of me I didn't have the yen to be taken seriously—as a person and as a professional rather than as a by-product of Oak Ridge. Consequently, every time I attempt something serious, such as a straightforward role in a straightforward play, people don't come to see me act. They come to see me explode.

I am tired of being called a blonde as though this were a criminal act comparable to stealing from the collection plate in church. Blonde hair, you see, reflects upon you, your family, your intelligence, your loved ones. You are the product of delinquent genes.

I am tired of photographers who insist that I pose

for "cheesecake" with a standard length of shank exposed. I persist in my belief that the disposition of meat around my tibia and fibula is not the best guide to my character or my capabilities.

In stories about myself I have discovered that I live recklessly, drinking champagne from my own slippers and smashing glassware against the wall. My accent, which is bad enough, always comes out worse in print so that I read an item in which I call a "farce" a "forsh," knowing well that "farce" is the one word in the English language that I can pronounce perfectly. The press has also informed me that my beauty is "impervious to heat," a claim which even Joan of Arc could not make. Then, too, I learn that I am "tempestuous," meaning that I do not talk in a monotone like the stationmaster calling out the itinerary on the train to Westport.

Interviewers have asked me what I think of the Emperor Franz Joseph, a man whom I have never thought of in my life. They have urged me to give the intimate details of alleged romances with men I have never met. They have pressed me for my opinions of men, women, love, ancient society, evolution, quantum physics, the fall of Rome, the nutritive value of goulash, and the validity of the claim that all Hungarian recipes begin with the injunction, "Steal two eggs." My opinions are welcome as long as they are shallow and no reader can possibly get in over his head. When I am asked questions on subjects I do not feel equipped to comment upon, I often discover

from the newspapers that I have opinions anyway.

A Hungarian proverb declares that "a woman is only good beaten." This makes a mighty good woman out of me.

My favorite article about the Gabor ménage—Mama, Zsa Zsa, Magda, and myself—appeared in a national magazine in 1950. The circumstances around that article deserve comment. Before writing the non-historical romance which he billed as a "fact" article, the author was kind enough to call on Mama for her help. Mama helped. She went out of her way to be gracious. The writer was always welcome in the house. Not being the shy type, he took good advantage of the welcome, dropping in for a spot of tea or a smidgen of roast beef at dinnertime. Far be it from me to call him a freeloader, but if you know a better word, I'll buy it.

Maybe it was partly our fault. We didn't flee in horror from the thought of a nationally featured article on the Gaboratory. Yet we accepted the author in good faith and we were prepared for a certain amount of kidding, a bit of criticism.

Well, the gentleman finally shook off Mama's hospitality, wiped the roast beef from his chin and the soup from his shirt, smacked his lips, sighed over memories of the fine wine that poured down his eager and bottomless little gullet, and then wrote a piece designed to blast us off the planet.

He began his very first paragraph by dubbing us *émigrées*, which is simply not true. I came to America before the Second World War because I had married

a physician who practiced in Hollywood. This does not make an *émigrée* of me in the accepted sense of the word. Then I learned from this scholar that I was thirty-three years old. To this very day I am not thirty-three, something that is easy enough to check. Since I have never made a fetish of remaining forever seventeen, and do not consider the thirties the front porch of the Old Ladies' Home, this distortion just came from the goodness of his heart.

Then I found that I was a "column character."

"A column character," he wrote, "to put it as mercifully as possible, is anyone whose fame (or notoriety) is due almost entirely to the fact that his or her name turns up in gossip columns with impressive regularity." He continued by remarking that to make the gossip columns "it is certainly no deterrent for a person to possess such qualifications as wealth, many marriages, beauty, eccentricity, an 'aristocratic' background only vaguely traceable, the state of being married to Tommy Manville—or, better still, the state of being Tommy Manville himself—an air of mystery, and as many dates as possible with George Jessel."

All right. Let's say that someone with these pungent qualifications has a good chance of hitting the gossip columns. I came to America broke, flat broke. That means penniless. And I am not rolling in wealth today. I have been married twice, yes, but nowadays that's about par for the course. I am told that I am beautiful, but I can't help it. I am not an eccentric. I do not have an "aristocratic" background and I never pretended to

one. I am not Tommy Manville nor have I ever met this marathon groom. Although I did meet George Jessel, he never asked me out. I have no publicity agent to plug me, and when I have appeared in columns it has never been through any effort of my own.

The writer of this article had me going, with my sisters, to a Swiss finishing school which I never attended, although they did. The least he could have done was send me my diploma.

Well, I can take stuff like this but I don't have to smile at it, say I love it, and ask the author to beat me, daddy, eight to the bar. I am part of a family called the Gabors, but I am also myself, Eva Gabor, and nobody else.

The people who have judged me professionally, as an actress, have treated me differently. On the road and in New York I have received good notices and poor notices. The poor notices bothered me as they would any professional, but right or wrong, they attempted to assess me in genuine terms and I was truly grateful for that.

And so I'm doing just what Grandpapa told me to do: I'm writing a book. And I'm writing it according to the old Hungarian proverb: "Don't stretch any further than your blanket reaches."

Men: Animal, Vegetable, or Mineral?

ONCE I WAS quoted as a quivering and ecstatic maiden in search of a man who would be "the boss." It appeared that I longed for a Neanderthal who would drag me by my golden tresses and wrap a shillelagh around my mouth if I ever opened it to express an opinion.

Now that's not quite what I meant. I like men to whom I can go for advice and reasoned counsel with some expectation of getting results, men who look on me as something more than an ornament or a pretty child who must be sheltered (from other men, of course). I've been sheltered, thank you, and all it got me was headaches.

Heirs, dukes, barons, and millionaires do not surround me. In all my life I have known only one millionaire. My closets are not stuffed with mink nor my jewel cases with diamonds. Because I have been on the cover of *Life* magazine and my picture has popped

up in every manner of publication, people think that men are always tossing Cadillacs and star sapphires my way. Ah, if that were so! But Mama remains the only person ever to have given me a fur coat. The clothes and jewelry I own I have bought with funds earned by my own work, and I have the bills to prove it.

I find that most men are really too levelheaded to liquidate their reserves whenever a blonde passes by. Most of the gifts I receive are the same gifts that a secretary receives: flowers, candy, and perfume. Maybe I get two dozen roses instead of six. Maybe I get a five-pound box of chocolates instead of the subway assortment. But who wants five pounds of candy anyway?

My first husband was not a rich man but my second husband was. Nevertheless, during my second marriage, even more than during my first, I tried to stand on my own feet, to struggle and work and do the things I wanted to do. I could have grown fat, buttery, and completely inert any time I wanted, and still get my three squares a day plus caviar, but I never chose that way.

Men are sensible. At times I find this unfortunate but true. They do not lay siege to my house, kiss the hem of my garment, or lay their Brooks Brothers jackets in the puddle for me to walk upon. If any man wants to worship at my feet he'll find plenty of room.

I think we all suffer to some extent from a conspiracy of standards. Men and women have a distorted view

of each other forced upon them by this conspiracy: the standards of "cheesecake," the unbalanced emphasis on physical beauty, the association of beautiful women with products for sale based on some psychological principle whereby a sex lives half its life on a billboard. With all of that it's rather a triumph that men and women stay levelheaded despite the brassière ads.

It is the fashion for European women to criticize American men as being childish in love, energetic in business and eating, and backward in conversation. As a woman raised in Europe I am often asked to play the part of referee in the title bout which brings together the American Male vs. the European Male. The European is the skillful and graceful boxer. The American has no technique but he likes to rough it up at close quarters.

Excuse me while I commit a major heresy. American men, by and large, are superior to their European brothers in their relations with women. This is true, but don't let on that you know it because it stamps you as an oaf who can't tell a bottle of prenatal California tokay from a cask of fine amontillado. The superiority of American men is not vast, mind you. It rests primarily in their concepts of companionship between the sexes. Otherwise they are much like the overseas male. If they meet maturity in a woman it frightens them half to death. They push the bureau against the wall, squeal piteously, and prepare to defend their honor. Fundamentally, the major thing that

divides the European from the American male is the Atlantic Ocean.

How can anyone take a label and attach it to so broad a category as "Men"? Whoever writes of Man, his habitat and behavior, is asking for trouble. I have read pompous volumes by sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists, who belabor the English language to arrive at the same conclusions that the movie magazines publish every week.

The continental man has the reputation of being more amusing than the American. He wins this reputation easily. Once out of his office or place of work, and in the company of women, he never talks business. The American is every bit as good a talker once you can get him to talk, but this isn't an easy proposition. No matter what the occasion—a party, an intermission at a play, an adagio movement at a concert (Americans can't stand adagios)—the businessmen cluster together for the sheer joy of talking about business.

But if we are talking of brilliant conversationalists who flit smoothly from philosophy to world politics to Greek classics, such chatter is every bit as rare in Europe as it is here. Nowhere in the world do brilliant conversationalists flock together like English sparrows.

Perhaps these ideas of the brilliant conversationalist derive from Hollywood versions of continental drawing-room comedies. That's not for me. I've been in continental drawing rooms where I have listened to conversations no more inspiring than the banter between two Macy buyers discussing a shipment of

baked beans. When dullness is combined with impeccable manners the result is lethal. Believe me, in some continental drawing rooms it would be a relief to see someone eat peas with a knife.

Generalities about women are just as common as generalities about men, but fortunately I am not expected to make them. I know only that neither sex is expendable, and if male and female disappeared from the face of the earth I would miss them both in that order. I would suggest, however, that those men who write about women should be a little more humble in our presence. Remember that Adam never demanded his rib back. He could have had Eden without Eve or the wilderness with her. He chose the wilderness, which accounts for the cleft in his hoof and the wild look in his eye resulting from passion or astigmatism.

Of all the fantasies that men create for their own pleasure, none makes less sense than the notion that women are too delicate to face reality. Women leave their adolescence behind earlier (and with far less reluctance) than men. The Old Grad, aged fifty-six, who carries his bay window to the Pennsylvania Station, where he waves a college flag and sings, "Fight, Team, Fight," is distilled male. So is Walter Mitty. Women can face both romance and a budget, but a man has to take them one at a time.

As for me, I'm glad I'm a woman. As Grandpapa used to say, "Always be satisfied with your own sex, or you'll never be satisfied with anyone else's."

How I Got This Way

I WAS BORN with a silver spoon in my mouth, a spoon supplied by my father's jewelry shop in Budapest. My sisters and I grew up with governesses, chaffeurs, and private schooling, and without Sigmund Freud. Our Budapest home was located in the section of the city known as Városliget. In the servants' quarters downstairs lived two or three faithful retainers, some of whom were faithful for as long as two months before they quit. Two or three servants was not an unusual possession in those days when half the nation cleaned house for the other half and a Mixmaster cost more than an upstairs maid.

In these surroundings I spent an uneventful childhood. In school I mastered that sublime and all-embracing ignorance typical of the wealthy sheltered child of Middle Europe. I was twenty-two before I discovered which end is up. (If you would like to know, send me ten cents in stamps and a self-addressed envelope.)

My ignorance was a rather cultured ignorance. My governesses, for instance, were German, French, and English, and in my teens I was already fluent in these three languages plus my native Magyar. I could talk about nothing in four languages.

I grew up in a form of social quarantine so strict that I might as well have had chicken pox to go along with it. A chauffeur drove me to school, a governess took me home. This spared me any possible rubbing of shoulders with my neighbors.

Five of my childhood years were spent in studying the piano. With an obstinacy that I doubt I could repeat, I managed to resist this exposure to music with amazing success.

The fact that I sank no deeper into my ignorance I ascribe to some mysterious manipulations on the European money market. The Gabor girls, one by one, finished their schooling by going to a pension in Switzerland. These pensions are known here as "finishing schools," a term which has a ruthless accuracy. When my turn came to be finished the money market shuddered. Hungarian pengös went down and Swiss francs went in another direction, with the result that it was wiser to go from Switzerland to Budapest than from Budapest to Switzerland. Since I was already in Budapest, this was a capital gain.

This cataclysm in the money market spared me the pension with its essential instruction in such matters as cooking, needlepoint, deep-frozen etiquette, and other inexpressible idiocies whereby a young girl was

made totally incompetent. Since then I have learned that life is possible without needlepoint. If the Swiss object they can withdraw their ambassador.

Another feature of my education was my association with boys. I didn't have any. I was not even permitted to talk to the little rascals. You know how it is when you're eight. You talk to a boy and the next thing you know he's carrying your books. How far is it from that to a bordello in the Casbah?

Like other children in my position, I went to the National Theater once a week, and to the National Opera once a week. The theater fascinated me, but during the opera I wriggled in my seat and tried my best to ignore what was going on below the peanut gallery. (The children always sat in the peanut gallery.)

Anyone who has pulled out the crying towel can wring it dry right now. Even if dull, this was not an actively unpleasant life. You can learn to live with luxury if you put your mind to it. The rules governing me and my sisters were strict, but there were ways of breaking them. We broke them so well and so consistently that our governesses came and went like summer breezes, feeding the rumor that Mama ran an employment agency. If my sisters and I could commit no mayhem on the antiques or statuary in the house, we certainly could on the governesses.

Of these governesses I can now recall only three. One was a tall, gray-haired French baroness. If you ask why a baroness became a governess I must tell you

that when a baroness is broke she is just as broke as anybody else. The glut of baronesses on the market was then severe, and I think we obtained ours by trading in an old duchess for whom we were given a liberal allowance.

Then I remember our English governess, who was more English than one would think possible, even for an Englishwoman. As a family the Gabors never went in for "typical British understatement." At dinner we said, "Pass the butter," with as much emotion as Orpheus pleading with Pluto for Eurydice. We were fond of our passions and we had an amazing collection of them. We believed that anything worth saying was worth saying loud.

I am reminded now of a play by the Hungarian George Tabori. A Hungarian family suddenly finds itself in the midst of a domestic crisis. Everybody shouts. Then one of the characters interrupts the *Sturm und Drang* to suggest, "Let's sit down and discuss this quietly like the English." Our English governess was always discussing things quietly like the English. It's not a bad technique. Nothing can make you so raging mad as someone's failure to raise his voice when it's the social thing to do.

The English governess was with us for years, and it was from her that I learned English. My English, of course, was not as good as hers but it was more raucous.

She returned the compliment by showing an ingenious resistance to learning the Magyar language. She lived her life in Budapest. She shopped in Budä-

pest. She took her pleasures and her sorrows there. And through it all, chin up and proud, she steadfastly refused to learn a solitary word of Magyar. It was an accomplishment of no mean proportion, and to this day I don't know how she did it. She must have had a tutor, or earplugs.

It is strange that I can remember so little of Cuki, our German governess, since I was fondest of her. The others were angular. Cuki was spherical. A curve always inspires more love than a straight line. Cuki was warmhearted, lovable, and fat—a standard recipe.

All in all, I can recall remarkably little about Budapest. Memories come back piecemeal, as in a goulash. I can, for instance, remember Lady, the sheep dog, who slept on the doorsill of the nursery and let no one in other than my parents. Vaguely, I remember a party at which I appeared in a white organdy dress. Grace Moore was there. I approached her for her autograph. She signed my book, looked me over, and remarked, "This is a very pretty girl." Years later when I met her in Hollywood she had no recollection of the incident. And I can recall five canaries that sang together and stopped together although each was in a different room.

This was home. There really isn't any more to remember.

The Maiden's Dream

THE COMMANDMENT, "Thou shalt not talk to boys," was like the American experiment in Prohibition. If you knew your way around there was always a place where you could find a real boy. None of that bathtub stuff either.

The injunction against talking to boys was meaningless without the apparatus to enforce it. Only a family that maintains a standing army could supply the apparatus. I talked to boys. Most particularly, I talked to Pista (pronounced "Pish-ta").

Every winter the children ice-skated on an artificial lake in Budapest. At one end was the usual little house where the skaters warmed themselves before the pot-bellied stove, put on their skates, bought a few little items from the commissary, and chatted. This house was coeducational. Here passed the first timid hand-touches, the gauche preenings of the adolescent, the high-pitched giggle that springs from the fourteen-year-old throat.

On the lake the law about boys was inoperative. Discipline had no wings on which to pursue the skaters.

I was fourteen and a half years old when first I laid eyes on Pista. Pista was then a boy of sixteen. He was an ice hockey player, a goalie. Whenever Pista played, I watched. My toes froze, my feet grew numb, my teeth chattered, my whole body longed for the warmth of home or the little skating house, but my heart bellowed hoarsely, "Freeze to death. I'm going to stay here and watch Pista."

Oh, how I watched Pista! To be near Pista—what greater glory was there in this world? (To this very day I can't answer that question.)

Came the summer—humane season!—and Pista mercifully switched to grass hockey. I continued to do all the worshiping while Pista, with admirable single-mindedness, refused to be lured from his promising career as a goalie. He was pleasant enough. He always had a "good morning" for me, or even a few words of chitchat on occasion, but nothing that I could take home and put in the hope chest. But when the next winter rolled around Pista discovered that this world contained not only hockey pucks but also Girls. And I was a Girl!

For an entire ice-skating season Pista loved me almost as deeply as he loved hockey, but not with as much skill. We had three secret meeting places. The first was a section of my own lawn, near the garages and the gate, which was kept locked more to keep me

in than to keep others out. Pista scaled the walls once or twice, spent a few minutes with me, and left me in a state of shock.

Our second rendezvous was the house on the lake where we skated. There the presence of others limited the violence of our passion, but we did manage to touch finger tips when no one was looking.

Our third rendezvous was the "lovers' lane" of the lake during the ice-skating season: an old abandoned castle some hundred yards from the shore. Couples would go there, walking on the toes of their skates so as not to dull the blades, open the huge old doors, and discover on the damp and chilly stone floors a little corner where they could mangle each other. These battalions of love always posted a guard at the entrance to the castle. The guard would give the signal when the enemy (parents or their equivalent in age) approached. Then the couples would disengage and turn casual, their faces like so many bowls of borscht.

There in the castle Pista and I found a corner that was ours. It was there, too, that Pista first kissed me. It was timid, quick, cold, frightened, tight-lipped—a real goalkeeper's kiss. But I rather liked it, having then no standards of comparison.

We believed many romantic legends concerning the castle. Most popular of these was the tale of its last inhabitant, a young count who wasted away for love inside its grim walls after the woman he loved was knifed to death by a jealous suitor. Realists, however,

had another and probably more accurate version of the story. They said that the count was carrying on in Budapest with a married woman twenty years his senior. She siphoned off much of her husband's wealth to the count for services rendered. One day, surprised in his lady's boudoir by the returning husband, the count leaped out the window, struck his head against a garbage can, and there expired. The realists also claimed that the count's death was utterly needless since the returning husband, far from being jealous, was positively relieved to find his wife's attention diverted.

During the winter that Pista and I discovered each other, I performed in a number of school dramatic productions. I remember how much I enjoyed these, and what a ham I must have been. Once I was an angel singing Christmas carols, the only off-key angel in heaven. Another time I played a fairy, wore gossamer wings, and spoke the most trivial lines with quivering emotion. But I gave my greatest performance when I was costarred with Pista in an unknown school play by an unknown author. All I can remember is that its main protagonists were a King and Queen who sat on a glorious throne, stage center. Stage center was the center of the school gymnasium, which served as our theater. Surrounding the King and Queen were the courtiers, consisting of besatined and besilked Hungarian children. Then came I, the Page Boy, in my tights. The lines escape me, but I remember the props.

I entered from one wing (the locker room), holding a velvet cushion on which lay a sword. My role was to advance to the King, kneel, offer him the sword, and bid him to battle in some noble cause such as mosquito control.

While this was going on Pista, in his brief role as Courtier No. 6, managed to give the impression that his task was to keep the King from getting hit by a puck. But I liked him.

Soon after the play, tragedy struck. One minute in the fields on a spring afternoon taught me to be cynical, hard-bitten, distrustful, and indifferent—in short, a woman of the world. It happened during a game of hide-and-seek. We were playing a three-cornered game, Pista, I, and my dearest girl friend, Kitty. When I was “it” I started to search for Kitty and Pista.

I found them.

By all the rules of the game each should have hidden separately. I found Kitty and Pista together, behind the hedge near the very wall that Pista used to scale for love of me. He was unfaithful—and with my very best friend! It was a shattering experience. Three years passed before I trusted another woman unless she was a decrepit old thing of eighteen or so.

The curious spring sun that melted the snows also seemed to freeze Pista’s heart. I fought valiantly, but I lost. Pista drifted off, and I reconciled myself to a career as a *femme fatale*. The bodies of men who killed themselves for love of me would heap high as I smoked my cigarette in a long holder at the gaming table, and

people would wonder what made me so cold and heartless, never knowing that beneath my icy beauty a hot flame burned an indelible wound in my heart, a wound whose convolutions formed the sacred name of Pista.

Bye-bye, Pista!

Be Still, My Bumping Heart!

I WAS SEVENTEEN before I had my next Hungarian romance, this time with an army officer for whom I shall invent the name of Ferenc. My set-to with Ferenc was so like a war-horse operetta that no one would dare put it on the stage today. There he was, a Hussar, no less, sleek and beautiful as the horse upon which he rode. Ferenc had blue eyes made bluer by dark hair with a distinguished streak of gray, the kind of streak many women go to vast trouble to achieve by artificial means. And his uniform! It had medals, epaulets, stripes down the pants, glittering boots, spurs, cap with visor, riding crop, tailored tunic, a Budapest road map, marabou frills, three pounds of starch, and a glove compartment. The only thing missing was the Hope diamond. Half the Hungarian national budget went into that uniform.

I loved Ferenc full time, and I think he loved me. We planned to marry. I decided to have six children,

a summer home, and a grand manner. In retrospect I think this prospect frightened two medals off his tunic, but he was a brave man and did not openly blanch at the prospect.

The romance with Ferenc was a forbidden one. Ferenc was a playboy. It was a matter of honor with the Hungarian officers to tickle the peasant girls with their riding crops, lean over their horses to flash toothy smiles, and take what came. They were always reaching for the brass ring on the carrousel. God only knows what went on when Ferenc was loose among the peasantry!

Once, at my insistence, Ferenc was a guest at a party in our summer home. Also present and accounted for was an honest-to-goodness count whose name is well known in Hungarian circles and beyond. His first name was Joska. Count Joska met me and, being a countish sort of fellow, acted very gallantly. He paid me many pretty compliments, occupied as much of my time as he could, and licked his chops in public.

I found this rather easy to take and it never occurred to me that I was in any way betraying the passion I felt for Ferenc. But Ferenc had a more misanthropic view of things. He detected signs of lust in the count's flaring nostrils and asthmatic breathing. Ferenc tossed a snide remark which Count Joska returned at six per cent interest. After that the squabble followed the standard procedure. The remarks became insults. Chins squared and faces reddened. Then Ferenc flung a magnum of sour cream into Count Joska's obliging

face. Ferenc, I might say, was gentleman enough to remove the boiled potatoes, but this did not appease Count Joska. The count drew himself even more erect (he had been drawing himself erect for ten minutes and was quite handy at it), called on one and all to witness the horrid insult, and demanded satisfaction.

The date was set for dawn three days later, with swords or sabers. (I don't know which is which.)

For three days I worried. How could I tell the outcome? I certainly didn't want Ferenc lacerated. Perhaps Count Joska would slice off one of Ferenc's pearly ears or saw off the end of his nose. Perhaps he might even run Ferenc through the midriff. I had visions of six inches of steel protruding from the nether side of Ferenc, and I could hear him gasping, "Eval Eval" as he died on the field of honor that chilly morning.

On the other hand I had no desire to see Count Joska skewered like so much shishkebab for his gallantry.

The night before the carnage I wished them both luck (separately) and took to my bed, faint with apprehension. I was wasting my time being apprehensive, for I did not realize to what a low estate the institution of dueling had actually fallen. After all, the authorities did not tolerate the random butchery of its citizens. The duels had become formalized matters in which either contestant would reach for the smelling salts if he did any serious injury to the other. The aim of the joust was merely to cut off a piece of the opponent's face—a small slice, hardly enough for a cocktail canapé.

I did not attend the slicing, but let it be recorded that Ferenc won me fair and square, and satisfied Count Joska's honor at the same time, all at the cost of about one cubic centimeter of the count's thin blue blood. Ferenc cut Joska's cheek a bit, and there the duel ended. The count stanching the flow of blood (for his sake we'll call it a flow) with a corner of his handkerchief, and lived to present other little girls with other big gallantries. And if Ferenc's chilly steel left a scar on Count Joska's face I am sure the count was as thrilled as a girl with her first evening dress.

Now I was more than ever Ferenc's, for had he not won me at sword's point? After the duel Ferenc took up where Joska left off. Think of any cliché concerning gallantry in the movies, and you can be sure that Ferenc did it. Budapest, for instance, had many flower girls with their baskets. Whenever we passed a flower girl he would buy me flowers. One blossom? Two? A dozen? Nonsense! Ferenc always bought the whole basket with a grand gesture. Naturally he could not conceive of accepting change, no less counting it, after he paid for the basket.

Ferenc looked expensive in his uniform but he was far from being rich. His greatest gesture in the matter of flowers took place when I was once ill and confined to my bed. He sent a huge basket of flowers piled so high that they had to be dismantled to get them through the door, and then reassembled on the other side. It was not until later that I discovered that Ferenc had not paid for the flowers. My father finally had to

clear up that little matter for him. Episodes such as this made my parents considerably less impressed than I with Ferenc's gallantry. Every time Ferenc was gallant it cost my father money.

He reached his real heights with the gold engagement ring embossed with his crest (two I.O.U.s rampant on a third mortgage) which he presented to me. It was a beautiful ring. It thrilled me and made me feel terribly grown up and important. But Father was not thrilled. It seemed that Ferenc had bought this little bauble on credit, and my father found himself paying the bill for my engagement ring! Ferenc had not even bought the ring in my father's shop.

Father soon grew weary of financing Ferenc's attempts to steal me, and I was finally forbidden to see him any more.

Ferenc is married today, and he wears a plain suit like other common mortals. I imagine his uniform graces some museum, where it stands beside the works of Titian, Cellini, and other masterpieces of art. The horse, I'm sure, has since gone skyward, where he has probably replaced one of the inferior nags that pulled Apollo's chariot.

Ferenc still writes to me, and I still reply. And I suppose we both still have moments when we say to ourselves. "What if?"

Here Went the Bride

YES, I'VE BEEN divorced twice. Tsk, tsk. But let's face facts. Divorces are almost as common as marriages today. A divorce is a marriage in which the groom gives the bride away. I have recently read that forty of every hundred marriages in America now end in Reno, Oklahoma, or the Virgin Islands. Without divorce some shipping companies would fail.

We hear various reasons for the prevalence of divorce. One doctor believes that youngsters derive their concept of marriage too largely from advertisements. The young woman envisions a vine-covered hubby who catches the eight forty-seven every morning while she runs about the suburb in her cream-colored coupé. Curly blond children spring up out of nowhere, like dandelions, and like dandelions they require no care. In the evening Hubby returns, the newspaper under his arm, to announce that he has just been elected president of General Motors. This comes as a surprise to C. E. Wilson.

When marriages prove to be something different, when young people discover installment payments, German measles, and a sinkful of dishes, the romance collapses. It had been built for eternity but the material was shoddy. Life today is a real pressure cooker.

Part of my failure in two marriages was due to the old conflict between home and career. People have written much nonsense about this conflict, yet it is real enough. Plenty of women combine both successfully, but in the entertainment field it is more difficult than elsewhere. That thing labeled "normal home life" is practically impossible for someone to whom work means travel hither and yon, crazy hours, bizarre professional demands. My marriages failed not because I am the Playgirl of the Western World. Far from it. They failed simply because I couldn't resolve that conflict to my own satisfaction or to the satisfaction of the two men who were involved.

When I first married not only my head but all the rest of me was in the clouds. Magda gave a party in Budapest. No one invited Eva Gabor, who was then seventeen and a half. Instead she went to her grandmother's house, where she was safe from the menace of frivolity and champagne. She wore a white, high-collared shantung dress. She had grown quite pretty by this time and she was terribly aware of it. This woman who had not yet left off being a girl thought of herself as a girl who had just become a woman. She had remarkably little common sense plus a large help-

ing of the Graustarkian *schmaltz*, an afterglow from her love affair with Ferenc. She was self-conscious, terribly sensitive, full of tragic feelings and ephemeral gaiety exaggerated out of all proportion.

That was me on the way home from Grandmother's. I left early, determined to crash Magda's party. I did, and there was the man, sitting quietly in a corner. Maybe other people were there but, if so, I walked right through them. Someone introduced me and as soon as the man said hello I was finished. He was a blond Swede, blue eyes (again!), six feet four in height—rather tall in those pre-professional basketball days. Since I am only five feet two I was his to do with as he wished. Resistance was useless, surrender the only humane course. If he had said to me then and there, "Will you marry me?" I am sure I would have said, "Yes." If you ask me how I know, I can prove it. He did ask me to marry him that very night. And I did say yes. You can see that I was the thoughtful type.

When I finally returned home I woke Mama up to tell her that I was soon going to be married. She muttered, "Go to sleep, Eva," and rolled over.

My fiancé was Dr. Eric Drimmer, a physician in Budapest for a three-day visit, after which he was to return to Hollywood, where he had his practice. He had long been separated from his wife and was then in the process of finalizing his divorce. When he left Budapest after three days of high fever, we were an old engaged couple.

Then came love letters that had to be kept in asbes-

tos containers. These letters kept me alive and flushed for three months. After that period he was to return to Budapest to marry me, but a cable informing him that his divorce papers were not in order spoiled our plans. I do not recall the details except that they had to do with the validity of a Mexican divorce in the United States. (What ever happened to the Good Neighbor policy?)

Not all the Gabors looked upon my engagement as ideal. Mama somehow had the foolish notion that I shouldn't be left at large without a keeper. Like many other foolish notions, this was correct. Mama then took me on the standard travel-to-forget routine.

Whoever invented the travel-to-forget technique needs his head examined. I traveled, but I took my insides with me. Mama concluded that Switzerland had good terrain for forgetting. She bundled me off to the Swiss Alps, where I heard Eric's name in every yodel and saw him pecking at me over the crest of the Matterhorn.

Then Mama added up the score and saw that her team was losing. She shipped me to the French Riviera, where I might be more easily diverted. There I stayed at the home of Captain and Mrs. Seymour, old friends who had a villa in Monaco. Mrs. Seymour, an intimate of Queen Mary of England, was a beautiful gray-haired woman who would sprint home for tea at 4 P.M. no matter where she was.

I spent a month brooding in this villa. If I sat on the beach and stared at the waves, Eric rode in on the

crest of every one. If I opened a can of sardines, there he lay, all six feet four, in olive oil. He was the postman, the mayor, the bus driver. It wouldn't have taken a Freud to interpret my dreams. They were absolutely unambiguous. I wouldn't have been allowed to have them in Boston.

Then Eric himself, Eric in the flesh, showed up in Monaco. This set the bells to ringing so loudly that Mama heard them in far-off Budapest, raced madly to Monaco, and whisked me home again, where she could at least see what was going on.

Then came my master stroke. I went to England with Zsa Zsa. In England I was spared the mental strain of trying to forget, for Eric cabled that he was coming on wings of song. He came all right, a god straight out of Norse mythology, to pick up what was left of me. He took me to the Registry Office in London, where a clerk in His Majesty's service married us. Thus we had the blessings of the King.

On the day of our marriage we moved into a little suite which Eric had retained in a Hyde Park hotel. There he marched me to the window and invited me to look down. At the curb stood a beautiful bright red Jaguar automobile. "It's yours," said Eric. "Your wedding present."

It was a sweet and thoughtful gift although his statement that the car was "mine" was an exaggeration. It was a little bit mine, a little bit Eric's, and mostly the finance company's. But I drove it happily, caring little about the extent of my equity in the cylinders.

After a brief spell in the hotel we located a tiny apartment, where we spent the first three months of our married life while I waited hopefully for my entry permit to the United States. (Eric was already a U.S. citizen.) Since we expected the permit any day we could not set up housekeeping. I was a happy, contented, and rather round housewife with one great advantage over other housewives: almost no housework.

When the permit came through we had everything except the steamship tickets and the money with which to buy them. We solved that problem by selling my share of the Jaguar. It was a fine wedding present, but a short one.

I might as well tell the whole story, including the forgiven-and-forgotten parts. The Gabor family looked with skepticism upon my union with the Norse god. A poll among the Gabors would have shown that the prevailing opinion was that Eric married me more for my liquid assets than for my inner beauty. Well, I am older and wiser now, and more firmly convinced than ever that this was not so. I say this not out of pride but because my whole experience with him proved it. I returned all the money my family provided, and the only assets I had in the world when we married were a mink coat that Mama bought me and a few pieces of jewelry. I was a rare character, a pauper in mink.

The trip to the United States was difficult. We had an inner cabin which would have been too small even for my husband in his single state. If he had put his feet out the porthole we might have been comfortable,

but our cabin was at the water line and he was afraid of barracuda.

Yet I was too happy and too scared to mind the discomfort on the trip. In a way I was beginning to flirt with what people call "reality." Life had always been something that someone else arranged for me. Now, for the first time, I could take nothing for granted. Dimly I perceived that I was about to meet up with a new type of bill, the kind you have to pay yourself.

Aboard ship one phenomenon fascinated me. Everybody called Eric "Doc" although we had told no one that he was a doctor. I finally concluded that either he looked like a doctor, or that all Americans call tall men "Doc."

We attracted much attention, first because we must have looked rather ludicrous together, he being a long drink of water and I a short sip. Then, too, we had "newlyweds" written all over us. That made us the butt of the constant attention and maudlin affection that total strangers lavish upon even a shotgun bride and groom. If at any time we failed to appear starry-eyed or turned a bit green from the heavy seas, it was an affront to all the passengers, who had us on a twenty-four-hour bliss schedule. Men looked at us, then smiled at their wives for the first time in four months.

We reached New York, where we passed three days in a frenzy. The first night in the hotel I placed my shoes outside the door, European style, to be cleaned. In the morning a bellhop knocked, returned the shoes

to me uncleaned, and asked if I was a Mohammedan.

Then we were off to California by train, sitting up all the way in a day coach. It was not too bad for me. My five feet two fit well enough into the coach chair, and I could sleep, but my poor husband must have suffered. He was too big, and every time he did doze off he woke up with a crick in his neck. But we made it. There we were—in Hollywood!

I tried to convince myself that in Hollywood my only genuine interests would be my marriage and my home, but deep down I knew I was trying to sell myself a three-dollar bill. I couldn't possibly live in Hollywood and not try to become an actress.

My first few months there come back to me in a tearful blur. I suddenly felt like a Kentucky child bride who wondered what she was doing so far from home when it was time to milk the cows. Hollywood was like nothing I had ever seen before, and that is exactly what it is like to this day. I had fully expected to see Claudette Colbert and Greta Garbo walking down the street whenever I shopped. It never occurred to me that people worked in stores and garages, waited on table in restaurants, sold autos and insurance. What was a plumber or carpenter doing in Hollywood? Didn't they know that the town was for movie actors?

We lived in a small hotel when we first arrived. Every morning my husband would leave me to my own devices while he put in a long day at the office. But I had no devices to which to be left. I didn't know a soul. I spoke an inadequate English with a combination of

British and Magyar accents. The ways of Hollywood confused me so that little tasks like shopping became exercises in agony. Every time I left the hotel I felt as though I were on patrol in enemy territory.

I had reason to fear my expeditions into the street. In Hungary I fondly believed that I spoke a rolling and mellifluous English. As a matter of fact my English was not too awful, but it was restricted by my economy-size vocabulary. What I did not know was that my accent, to which my English governess had grown accustomed, was practically unintelligible in Hollywood, where no sentence without the words "baby," "darling," "kiddo," or "daddy" is acceptable. I couldn't even say "fabulous" or "fantastic"—Basic English in Beverly Hills.

One day I wrote a letter home, but I had no stamps. Having heard that American drugstores sell stamps, I ventured from the hotel all by myself, took courage from the peaceful aspect of the streets, and walked boldly up to a drugstore soda fountain, where I asked the man for stamps. The soda jerk nodded, turned around, and came back with an ice cream soda which he set before me. I looked at it in confusion. Not having the courage to refuse it or to repeat the request, I drank the soda. It wasn't bad.

I'm still trying to figure out how I could have said, "Please give me stamps," in such a manner that he interpreted it to mean an ice cream soda.

I reacted to this general situation by going back to bed every morning as soon as my husband left for the

day, and weeping all over the linen. For three months I devoted one hour each morning to choking sobs and bitter tears. I should have been rented out to drought areas. I wrote Mama of my woes in tearstained letters. Even my first Hollywood Christmas, passed as a guest of Arthur Hornblower and Myma Loy, did not shake me out of my depression. Everyone at the party was nice to me but I was so shy, so frightened of the big names, that I don't think I said four words all evening.

Although I knew no one in Hollywood, Mama had long been a friend of the Hungarian actress, Ilona Massey. Presuming on this friendship, I made several attempts to meet Ilona Massey but always got the brush-off. I didn't understand Hollywood then. I didn't realize how often people who have ulterior motives in meeting a star claim mutual friends by way of introduction. Years later I met Ilona Massey, under different circumstances and found her generous and warmhearted.

Once, to help break the ice and find me a place in Hollywood, Eric and I gave a dinner party. Eric invited six of his friends and I invited no one since I knew no one. The dinner party was my idea. I wanted to play the hostess. The previous week Mama had sent me a large package from Hungary containing all sorts of canned delicacies that I could hardly wait to open. These were to make up the dinner.

The night of the party I set the table with candles and flowers, welcomed the guests, and retired to the kitchen to do the "cooking." I was about to impress

Eric's six friends with Hungarian cookery and I wondered whether, if I were asked if I had done the cooking, I should be honest or not. I had just about decided to take the credit when I opened the first can. The contents were rotten. So were the contents of the second can. And the third. The entire shipment had turned rotten and I was left without one delicacy to put on the table.

We had bacon and eggs for dinner.

I was lonely. My frustrations accumulated. One morning a toothache saved me by driving me from my tear-soaked bed to the dentist's office. I sat in the dental chair and opened my mouth wide, please. The dentist, a woman, stuffed wads of cotton under my lip, opened a drawer, and took out one of the drills that was used to dig the Holland Tunnel. She drove it up to the hilt in one of my molars. I closed my eyes, gripped the armrests of the dental chair, and concentrated on keeping my head from falling off. When I opened my eyes again a strange man was admiring my tonsils. He had wandered into the chamber of horrors to watch the grim proceedings.

When I was able to close my mouth he said to me, "Would you like to be an actress?"

First I said yes, and then the dentist introduced me. The stranger was a talent agent or "flesh peddler," as they are more succinctly known with a brutality that is not wholly undeserved.

Every dream I had ever had of becoming an actress rushed back and overwhelmed me. Now I could be

another Gizi Bayor! I had wanted to be a Gizi Bayor ever since I saw her when I was a child in the peanut gallery of the Hungarian National Theater.

Then the talent agent asked me to stand up. He stared at me for two or three minutes. He was the original Man with the X-Ray Eyes and I waited patiently for him to tell me what I had eaten for breakfast.

When the examination was over he delivered his verdict. "Miss Gabor," he said, "you will have to lose ten pounds." Skinny in Hungary—fat in America! And I weighed exactly the same as when I left Budapest!

The agent asked no questions about my ability, training, or accomplishments. Only my weight.

The prospect of acting ended the morning sob fests in my hotel bedroom. I was going to be a short blonde Garbo. The agent confirmed this in my mind when he called to tell me I had an appointment in the Paramount Studios for a screen test.

I was about to weigh in for my new career!

De Milles of the Gods

ONCE IN BUDAPEST I had seen a picture in which Joan Crawford played the role of an actress who was "at liberty" or unemployed. It was very tragic. Joan needed work, needed it badly. One day she heard of an opening and hastened to apply for the job. What impressed me most deeply was that she applied for this job dressed in a beautiful long mink coat.

Well, I was unemployed and I had a mink coat, the coat Mama had given me. Therefore I put on the coat. You might think there is nothing odd about wearing a mink coat if you own one, and you would be right except for one circumstance. It was the middle of a Hollywood summer, when even the most purse-proud and snobbish of mink owners had long since put the coats in the Frigidaire. But not little Eva, age eighteen.

Wearing the mink coat turned out to be a bit of unconscious wisdom on my part. I marched straight

down to Haggerty's department store to buy a dress for my screen test. Since I had no money I tried to open a charge account. Nobody was more astonished than I to discover that Haggerty was willing to open the charge account without a single embarrassing question. I had bullied the store with mink, smothered all doubts in fine fur. Luckily the credit department personnel couldn't see the dress I was wearing underneath that coat.

I still have pictures of myself in the costume I purchased in Haggerty's. "Costume" is the accurate word although I was then under the impression that what I purchased was terribly sophisticated. It was a Mata Hari outfit, the sort I had dreamed of wearing ever since Pista threw me over for that vixen Kitty. It was slinky and black with appropriate froufrou, including sequins and bangles. Once I put it on, I walked with a slight roll like a sailor who has been too long at sea. This was my version of a sensuous and maddening stride.

I wore my hair long and I looked eighteen years old, an impossible situation for an eighteen-year-old actress. So I tied my hair on top of my head like the meringue on a good lemon pie. This added two weeks to my appearance. Thus equipped, I marched to the Paramount Studios prepared to elbow Marlene Dietrich into the Pacific Ocean.

When I arrived in the studio I draped the mink over the back of a chair, crossed my legs, and proceeded to look bored to death. A talent man stared at me and

talked as he stared. I'm not sure what he said but I remember a question he suddenly flung my way. "Miss Gabor," he said, "will you show me your personality?"

I was startled. Was this an indecent proposal? Was I supposed to do a bubble dance? Stand on my head? Play a musical saw? Was a personality something like a slip which showed if you weren't properly dressed?

I did the only possible thing. I talked. In the course of talking my personality must have showed because the talent man invited me to meet some gentlemen in the front office. As we walked toward the front office I found myself in the shadow of a tall rangy man. The talent man stood me next to this beanpole to get a comparative view of my size. The beanpole was Gary Cooper, who was quite good-natured about being used as a tape measure. I felt as Alice must have felt when she nibbled the wrong side of the mushroom in Wonderland. I shrank as Cooper grew. I didn't know then that actors walk on inclines, boards, blocks, or fall through holes in the floor to adjust their camera sizes, nor had I yet met some of those actors who, when stripped, are shorter than their shoes.

After the casual measurement the talent man led me into another room where six or seven men sat under a strong lamp. I looked around for the rubber hose and other evidence of the third degree. I expected James Cagney to stride in, wash my face with a grapefruit, and demand to know what I was doing in Paramount, babe.

The gentlemen there assembled also asked me to

show my personality so I concluded that this was a standard request. After I responded by talking, they said they would make a silent screen test of me and put me on the payroll at seventy-five dollars per week.

I still had a Hungarian approach to American money. Whenever I shopped or bought a meal in a restaurant, I always translated the check into Hungarian pengös. This was a depressing thing to do. It always came out to so many pengös—at least enough to rent a house for one month in Budapest—that I lost my appetite. I could not get over the feeling that to eat was the wildest and most irresponsible extravagance imaginable. But when I learned that I was to earn seventy-five dollars per week I translated that, too, into pengös. Immediately there arose before me visions of a Beverly Hills château with a fine swimming pool, a private hunting preserve, a tennis court, servants shelling Indian nuts—all paid for in pengös.

I received news of my salary with a cool and almost disdainful indifference. With seventy-five a week I could buy and sell Paramount!

Whenever I go near a movie box office I am still excited by memories of my first screen test. The test consisted of my running before the cameras with a big box containing an evening dress. I am very happy. I tear open the box, hold up the dress with much oohing and aahing, and slip into it. This sequence served the double purpose of showing me in both day and night clothes and of testing the dramatic impact of my oohs and aahs.

In the second sequence I had to laugh happily and then cry miserably. Well, I could act well enough to laugh and cry but I found that when the laugh and cry were placed next to each other with their ends touching it was difficult to make the transition. The laugh made me feel like crying and the cry made me feel like laughing.

Yet the test was a success. I was informed of my hire at the same time that I was given another order: I must lose ten more pounds! I had entered the dentist's office weighing 122. When I reported to Paramount I was down to 112. And now I had to fight my way to 102. This bothered me. Neither I nor anyone else had ever considered me fat at 122. I wasn't sure I could stay alive at 102. Where would I put the food? How American women suffer! They eat more, but they must weigh less, than the majority of mankind. I took off that ten pounds, but I have never dieted since and I'm a hearty eater. It seems to me that American women are longer and smaller-hipped than Europeans. You can't change round European lines. Some circles should never be squared.

I had my contract. Naturally I expected to star opposite Gary Cooper in his next picture. Had I not been measured against Cooper's expanse on my first visit? Didn't I fit?

Then the process of disappointment set in. It took some time, and it followed a very happy period during which I was coached. My first coach was a splendid woman named Florence Enright, who gave me a gen-

uine approach to the art of acting. She worked with me daily from nine to six at the Paramount Studios.

When you are new and delivered over for coaching, you work on a miniature stage with a group of actors. In my group were Susan Hayward and Jeanne Cagney (Jimmy's sister). We would rehearse scenes every day, playing before a small audience whom we could not see. Whenever a new lamb was led to pasture he worked with our group, and thus I had constantly to repeat scenes from plays. This was invaluable experience for me.

We would spend a good part of our afternoons observing and studying the work of other people, or wandering over to various sets to watch whoever was shooting there.

Margaret Webster was in charge of my second test in Hollywood—my first speaking test following six months of coaching. She later wrote me a letter expressing her belief that I would become a good actress. I put the letter in my hope chest with a blue ribbon around it and a piece of wood for knocking on.

This, to me, was the life. I finally had a place in Hollywood. I had friends. I knew my way around. I could relax and enjoy myself. I discovered that people in the entertainment industry are always loving. They lead a life of superlatives. Every moment is a moment of passion and every sleeve, right and left, bears a heart.

It took me some time to get used to addressing people and being addressed by them in terms I had formerly reserved only for those nearest and dearest to

me. But I caught on, and now I'm as verbally loving as the best of them. During my first days in Hollywood everyone addressed me as "darling" two minutes after an introduction. Some time passed before I realized this was not pure flattery. Everybody calls everybody else "darling"—their best friends, and those they'd like best to murder. Men call other men "darling," or "sweetheart," or sometimes simply "daddy." A fifty-year-old actor will say "Hello, daddy," to his thirty-three-year-old agent.

When you want to speak endearingly to someone you are really fond of, you have no vocabulary left. Your most passionate phrases have been lavished on the cameraman, the grocer, the agent, and the electrician. It is a "darling" world.

Once I rode home in an auto with a young fellow and another woman. When we reached the woman's home the driver got out of the car, took her to the door, enfolded her in his arms, and kissed her good night. When he returned I told him I had not caught the woman's name when we were introduced. What was it?

"I have no idea," he said. "I just met her myself." He was not being cheeky or forward. He was just saying good night the way everybody says good night.

This makes genuine love scenes rather weird from the linguistic point of view. If the man you love embraces you with exquisite tenderness, he dare not murmur "Darling" in your ears. He has just referred to a fat operator who did him out of six per cent on a deal

as "darling." Instead, he whispers passionately, "Oh, you little bum!" which means, "Sweetheart, I love you!" When he refrains from kissing you he is showing an erotic restraint which he never exercises among those who mean far less to him.

I loved my life in Hollywood during this period. The routine was wonderful: acting, observing, lunch in the commissary, an atmosphere of hard work tempered by informality. In the commissary I caught my first glimpse of such people as Marlene Dietrich and Dorothy Lamour, who drifted in like visions in search of tuna fish on toast. They used the private dining room next door, the dining room reserved for the elite. At that period "private" didn't mean "Eva."

Then the sound of a small wolf howling at the door disturbed the peace of my home. I hocked my few pieces of jewelry, presents from my parents, and, just to prove that I wasn't completely levelheaded, spent part of the proceeds on a Mercury which had once been a convertible. The top, however, had long since become gangrenous and dropped off, leaving the convertible with nothing to convert. When it rained I used to drive to the studio holding an umbrella over my head with one hand. This encouraged people to draw conclusions about the Hungarian nation as a whole, a bit of inductive reasoning that has some obvious faults.

When I ended my day's work I would grab a bite of dinner and pass my evenings watching movies. My system was to enter a theater at seven and stay till they

threw me out, usually about midnight. My motives were different from those of children who sit through the triple feature three times on Saturday afternoon. My purpose was to learn English better, and I found that by sitting through the same picture two or three times I absorbed more of the language. This worked out well since Eric was then going to school every night to continue his studies for a Ph.D.

I had to improve my language. When I first reached Hollywood it was tempting to hang onto my accent for dear life. At first I gave in to that temptation. Everybody thought my mistakes were so darn cute. I said amusing things by accident, and my goulashed English sometimes gave me the impression that I was a wit because it made people laugh. This gave me little incentive to speak good the English or to learn grammar. It seemed to me that I could get much further with my mistakes than with my grammatical achievements.

I was full of Goldwynisms, and had I been present when Goldwyn first declared, "I should have stood in bed," I would have seen nothing wrong with that statement, grammatically or otherwise. Why shouldn't Mr. Goldwyn have stood in bed? Didn't I stood in bed when I was lazy and didn't feel like getting up? Didn't I instruct a friend that if she wanted to visit me in the hotel she would find the entrance sideways? Didn't I ask the clerk in Haggerty's to show me some dresses for street walking?

Oh, how everybody loved those mistakes and encouraged me to cling to them! But I couldn't cling to

them if I were to have any latitude whatsoever in the movies.

After a few months of temporary paradise came the gray dawn. Vaguely I began to perceive that I was not going to be Gary Cooper's leading lady. The demand for cowgirls with Hungarian accents was then at a low ebb. Eight months of study and coaching passed, eight months of waiting for the call. Then the call came. I was tested for a Ronald Colman picture, *My Life with Caroline*. I made the test with Reginald Gardiner while Ronald Colman watched.

The set was a staircase. I come down the staircase, bubbling and happy, to greet Reginald, my returning husband. I rush to him, full of love and joy, but what does he do, the dirty bum? He informs me that he wants to leave me. (I'm too fat for him.) My life is shattered and I burst into bitter tears.

It was my second screen test all over again, the quick change: happy laughter to bitter tears. The test went well but I didn't get the part. The judgment was that, although I did a good job, I photographed too young for the part. Yet the work wasn't wasted. On the basis of this test Paramount picked up my contract for another year and assigned me to a picture.

You see, miracles do happen, but very slowly.

Getting in the Act

WHEN I ARRIVED in Hollywood I thought everyone was in pictures including the mayor and the commissioner of sanitation. By the time I tested with Reginald Gardiner I thought that nobody was in pictures. This was just a world where people spent their lives being coached for something they would never do. But now I was to be in a picture, a real live picture with sound track and actors and all that stuff!

My first picture is the sort of thing one remembers when coming out of the ether. I recall that Fred MacMurray, Mary Martin, and Robert Preston starred. I was to play the role of a nurse. The costume department dressed me in my Florence Nighties and I went forth to emote. When I came on the set the director looked me over and asked, "What are you doing here? You look like you need a nurse."

I was just too girlish for the part, and so what was to be the greatest piece of nursing since the Crimean War

never took place. Therefore I bawled. I stood on the set and bawled and bawled, my tears making a muddy mixture of mascara, eyebrow bluing, grease paint, powder, and rouge. I cried all over my nurse's uniform, bit my lip, couldn't catch my breath, and turned blue in the face. I wanted my popsicle!

The producer who witnessed this fit wasn't man enough to take it. "Miss Gabor," he said, "if you stop crying I promise you I'll find you a part in this picture."

It took me about three seconds to get control of myself. He kept his promise and found me another part. In my new role I was to lean affectionately against Robert Preston and then pitch horseshoes. With my training I leaned against Robert Preston very well. I found that leaning against Robert Preston makes a girl feel like pitching horseshoes. I had never pitched a horseshoe in my life, but some kindly fellows gave me the rudiments and I set to work before the cameras.

The very first horseshoe I pitched was a ringer. The director yelled, "Cut!" Then he turned to me to say, "Look, Miss Gabor, you're supposed to miss."

I explained that I was new to this business of pitching horseshoes, and if the cameras would be kind enough to go to work again I felt sure I could miss. I pitched another horseshoe—and scored another ringer.

"Miss Gabor!" shouted the director. "This is no place to show off! Either you miss, or get out of the picture!"

I tried to convince him that I had no idea of what

I was doing. Then he hit upon a solution. "Miss Gabor," he suggested, "we'll change the script a little. This time concentrate on getting another ringer and we'll shoot it that way."

I concentrated on getting another ringer, and missed by four feet.

"Fine!" said the director, fully satisfied.

That made me a movie actress.

My next picture was a B picture only to those too lazy to go down the alphabet. This little item, called *Forced Landing*, starred Richard Arlen and Nils Asther. Neither story nor character development had any dimension. In fact it was a No-D picture. (Today we are lucky: we can see No-D pictures in 3-D.) To this leisurely artistic endeavor named *Forced Landing* the studio had allotted all of ten days' shooting time. It should have won an Oscar for breathless haste.

The director launched this nightmare by advising me that the only way to be a successful actress is to fall in love with the leading man. Imagine the mayhem in Hollywood if anyone took his advice! I had no intention of embarrassing Richard Arlen, the leading man, who was gentle, kind, and co-operative, but gave no evidence whatsoever of passion.

That was a B picture and I was a B actress. Today I can assess that experience with some objectivity. I think I have a natural talent as an actress, but I had received only nine months of training. My mind was so confused that I had not been able to synthesize my natural and acquired skills. To be thrown, with this in-

sufficient background, into a ten-day quickie was guaranteed to bring out the worst in me. The worst in me bloomed like the flowers in spring, tra-la.

After *Forced Landing* another picture was in the offing. As I prepared for it a Paramount general asked if I could sing. I told him I couldn't sing but I could try. He supplied me with a coach who devoted three days to transforming me into Jenny Lind. At the end of the three days my little throat was bursting with song and I was ready for the general. I draped myself on the piano, à la Helen Morgan, flung back my head to air my vocal cords, and warbled. The producer listened glumly for two or three minutes. Then he arose and walked out of the room. That was his only comment and I interpreted it as a form of criticism.

In another picture in which I played the second lead while Robert Preston and Philip Merivale carried the burden, I had the role of a spy. This picture was a B-plus and in it I performed at least as well as I did in *Forced Landing*. This ended my career with Paramount. They gave up on me, but I didn't give up. If anything, I was more determined than ever to act. I felt plenty of anguish to go along with the determination. I knew very well that most of what I had done, I had done wrong, yet I felt that my experience, covering two years, had given me a foundation.

Something else happened to me. I really grew up. My ignorance about such facts of life as money, an ignorance that may have been charming in a child but remained simply ignorance in an adult, disappeared. In

its place I developed something of a hard head, and if I did not yet have a thorough grasp of reality at least I agreed to recognize its existence. I worked every day and went home at night to clean house and cook. I use the word "cook" in its broadest possible sense. If I told my husband that I was going to throw something together, you may believe that I threw it together. I made only two demands of food: that it be dead and inside a can. But I bore the responsibility for seeing that it ended up on the table with a plate under it. Times were rough for us, and I finally realized that if I needed something that cost more than fifty cents I would have to go out and earn the money.

After Paramount and I decided to get along without each other I went through a period of high-grade suffering. My mental state deserved a neurotic title of some sort, but I knew only that I was confused and unhappy. I wanted so badly to act in pictures, but nobody offered me a job. I didn't know what to do. I was drifting away from my husband because I was so completely and wholly wrapped up in myself and my own problems. Quite a package! I had married Eric before I had matured sufficiently to know what I wanted of life, and now he was paying the penalty of my unpreparedness. It became clear to us that the marriage could not last. Circumstances had almost forced me to be self-centered. Until I solved some problems for Eva Gabor I could hardly afford to think of anyone else.

Half a year passed. No messenger on horseback leaped off at the postern gate, fetched me from my bal-

cony, and carried me to M-G-M. I packed up my mink coat and my scented pawn tickets, sold my Mercury for thirty dollars to some poor sucker, and left for New York City, where I planned to pick a likely theater and batter down the doors. My sister Zsa Zsa arrived in New York at the same time.

I decided to impress Zsa Zsa. After all, I was a great unemployed Hollywood personality, and I had to look like one. When Zsa Zsa met me at the airport I was wearing a black hat with a brim whose circumference was so huge the Kentucky Derby could have been run around the edge—with small horses. Over this modest hat I draped a few square yards of black veil which flowed out behind me like the wake of a steamship. I looked like a sandwich girl for a remnant house.

When I was in Hollywood nobody wanted me, but the moment I reached New York I began to receive wires reading, "Come back! Come back!" I actually refused one picture offer. The frantic telegrams, dispatched by my hungry talent agent, made me feel as though I were the greatest box office attraction in Hollywood who had suddenly deserted the industry just when it needed someone to love it. But when my agent wired that David Selznick would fall into a fatal coma unless I sped to Hollywood at once, that was too much for my nerves. I had as much moral fiber as overcooked spaghetti, so I hopped a train for Hollywood immediately. As we don't say in Hungarian, I had rocks in my head.

After I settled down in Hollywood once more I dis-

covered that Mr. Selznick, who was dying to see me, was also too busy to see me because he was entertaining Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who was then in Hollywood. If Mr. Selznick is still dying to see me, he is a long time a-dying. While I waited for him to sign me to a ten-year contract at fifty billion pengös a year, Twentieth Century offered me a job through my agent. As we do say in Hungarian, a pigeon today is better than a squab tomorrow. Maybe it would have proved wiser for me to wait for Mr. Selznick's last gasp. I will never know.

Did Twentieth Century assign me to a picture right away? Ah no! They sent me to school again to start the coaching and waiting and fingernail biting. This was the last straw. I was ready to do murder. Here I was, in pictures but not in pictures, training for a part that I knew might never materialize. I began to view the waitresses in the road-service restaurants with critical eye. In Hollywood you go from training school either into pictures or into a road-service restaurant. I dreamed of serving David Selznick on a hot dog roll with mustard and a little sauerkraut on the side.

Then the muezzin called once more. Twentieth Century offered me a role in Ernst Lubitsch's *A Royal Scandal*, starring Tallulah Bankhead, a woman who has since provided fun for the entire family. Otto Preminger directed.

My first scene was scheduled for the opening day of shooting, and I recall being terribly nervous as Tallulah Bankhead watched and I prepared to play a sequence

with Charles Coburn, who had just won an Academy Award. Charles Coburn had about five thousand times my experience in the theater. It was a bad day for Mr. Coburn. He kept forgetting his lines in the middle of the scene. As far as I was concerned, that was an awfully sweet thing for him to do. The spectacle of an experienced actor, who knew the insides and outsides of Hollywood and the legitimate theater, fluffing his lines, gave me all the confidence I needed. Nobody arrested Mr. Coburn. I was safe.

Later in the shooting of the picture I had a little chat with Tallulah in which she advised me to quit Hollywood and go to New York for a career on the stage. Now I wish I had taken her advice, but what's the use of playing the if-deck?

To me the greatest part of *A Royal Scandal* was meeting Ernst Lubitsch, with whom I became close friends. I was a habitual visitor in his elaborate Spanish villa in Bel Air. Every room in that villa was a ballroom—even the kitchen. He filled it with Indian and Mexican handicrafts. The library was really a library and Ernst Lubitsch really read the books. In a curious way, he was the only thing that didn't seem to belong in his grandiose villa.

Ernst Lubitsch was tiny, shorter than I. He had about him a Panlike quality, as though he had just come out of the woods holding a champagne glass. His conversation was all wit. He was one of the few men I have ever met who was almost always genuinely amused by the business of living. He teased me merci-

lessly, pulled my leg, laughed at me, and made me love it and come back for more. I will never forget the pleasant evenings in which he managed to make his huge rooms feel cozy as a well-heated shack in the woods.

Lubitsch was all of a piece. I have found that people in Hollywood are seldom generous with encouragement. A little fear discolors all success; the tempo of competition is a shade too sharp. Friendship with Ernst Lubitsch, however, was not based on encouragement or kind words. He was afraid of his friends because he was that rare thing: a man who spoke only the truth concerning matters of importance to him. He had screen writers among his friends but he would never read their scripts. If they were bad scripts he would have to say so, and he did not want to put himself in that position. When I played in stock on the West Coast, Ernst refused to see me perform. He was afraid he might not like my performance and then he would have to submit to the torture of telling me so.

Since I matched his genuine and natural gaiety with a gay front which I supplied for the occasion, I suppose Ernst Lubitsch never fully realized how seriously I took myself. Just as well! He looked for an area of self-doubt, of self-satire, in everyone, and he mistrusted those who did not have it.

I miss the man.

After *A Royal Scandal* I was again "at liberty." It started as acute liberty and then developed into chronic liberty. But I didn't want the liberty of unemployment. I wanted the tyranny of a job. After many

more months of nervous waiting I did two more pictures. One was *The Wife of Monte Cristo* with John Loder, the other was *Song of Surrender*, starring Claude Rains.

All these plush roles got me halfway to nowhere. Marlene Dietrich managed to survive my competition. To put it bluntly, I just couldn't get another job, and the waiting drove me nuts.

While I was carrying on my platonic relationship with *Twentieth Century*, I acted on the legitimate stage in Schnitzler's *Affairs of Anatol*. We played in a Hollywood theater with Philip Merivale as the star. One night we gave a special performance for the benefit of the USO. After the performance I met a Coast Guardsman, Charles Isaacs. Ah me, but he was beautiful in his resplendent uniform! Remembering Ferenc, I should have locked myself in the cellar, but sometimes being weak is lots of fun.

The man inside that uniform turned out to be a swell guy. My first marriage had by this time been dissolved. (For gory details, consult the latest *Farmers' Almanac*.) I was emotionally unemployed at the moment but Charles Isaacs gave me plenty of work. And so I ups and marries him.

Talk about your change of fortune! There I was, a girl who had learned to worry about fifty cents, suddenly the wife of a man to whom small change was a petty annoyance like stuck zippers. Charles was what is called "well to do"—a genteel way of saying rich. He sure was rich.

No longer a hotel dweller, I suddenly blossomed out as a hostess in Charles's beautiful home. I didn't have to rub the lamp to make the genie appear. The genie rubbed the lamps for me, and polished the silver, too, while I sat smugly by, contemplating fate and okaying it.

Charles Isaacs spoiled me. I could do no wrong, say no wrong, as far as he was concerned. Even when I was wrong I was right. But he was no milquetoast or jellyfish. He was the most considerate man I have ever known, and in retrospect I'm sure that I wasn't the better part of that marriage bargain.

To the occasional parties we gave in the little house in Beverly Hills came men and women whom I could never reach professionally. People who would slam the office door in my face were happy to come to my home as guests. I distinctly remember our first anniversary party. We had set little French tables about our garden. The place looked like a girl's dream of fairyland or, for that matter, like my own dream of fairyland. I wore a beautiful black gown and sported a 102° fever from sheer excitement. I recall Jennifer Jones coming in and telling me she had just ordered a dress exactly like the one I was wearing. After the party she was planning to do road work in preparation for ten rounds with her dressmaker.

Then entered a producer who, for sweet charity's sake, shall be nameless. He came with his girl friend hanging on his arm like a subway strapholder, sat down at a table, and tested the champagne, rolling it about

on his tongue as though he were sampling a new astringent mouthwash. After swishing the champagne around and about his molars he swallowed ostentatiously, made a face, and inquired if the bubble water was domestic or French. I informed him that the champagne was domestic, whereupon he rose to his feet, the pretty appendage still clinging to his bicep, and stalked out of the garden, the house, and my life.

Such are the penalties in Hollywood for serving domestic champagne to some domestic producers.

Time passed. I should have been smart enough to stay happy but I was ambitious, as I still am, and that ambition worried me at night, followed me by day. It was the wee small insistent voice that never would be still. That voice began to interrupt me when I talked to my husband.

Then came an offer to do a motion picture in Europe. I wanted to do it, and I didn't want to. It would mean leaving my husband for a long period on a venture that was a gamble at best. I finally turned down the offer for Charles's sake. More months rolled by. I did several plays in Hollywood but this was as far as I could get.

One night I sat down to have a long talk with my husband. It was no use, I said. I couldn't take it any longer. I had to pack up and go to New York to give my career a try in those parts.

When I went to New York I left my marriage behind me. I can't say more about it because I do not believe it is right for me to say more. Every person is

entitled to a part of her life marked "Private, No Trespassing." Let's just say that Charles Isaacs and I were born under the wrong signs, and let it go at that.

Thinking back, breaks mean a little in every walk of life, but in Hollywood they have a disproportionate value. I have often thought that had I not been judged too young for the role in *My Life with Caroline* I probably would have been a star, although I could no more act at that time than I could play third base for the Dodgers. (Playing third's not so tough.) Paramount was already preparing a contract for me, based on my assumed role in *My Life with Caroline*, a contract restricting me to three pictures a year on the theory that it is bad for a star to appear too often.

There isn't much of a middle in the movie business. You're either on top or there's a hole in your shoe.

And so, as the sun set behind the corner of Hollywood and Vine, I headed east, leaving behind the great film city, which didn't even know that I had gone.

The Happy Time

ANYONE IN AMERICA who wants to be an actress wants to be an actress on Broadway. For years I had dreamed of a role in a Broadway production, any role however large or small. I had heard much of Broadway's glamour and glitter. I expected, despite all the pictures I had seen, that New York's theater district would be a place of marble columns, heroic statues, and European directors in flowing capes. Instead I found a conglomeration of haberdashery shops catering to the bright-plumaged male, lingerie shops featuring undies designed by a sex maniac, auction houses, Pokerino parlors, hot doggeries, and amusement galleries filled with nickel-snatching machines. High above, flanking either side of a mechanical waterfall, stand two huge statues of a man and a woman, both raw. They advertise a clothing house. Big they are but good they ain't.

Was there really glamour in the midst of this honky-

tonk atmosphere? Where was it? On the street corners or in the drugstores where actors and musicians hang out, waiting for word of possible jobs, using Broadway as an outdoor employment agency? Obviously not. But the glamour is there, all right. It is inside the theater, any theater, and I was willing to fight my way through an acre of Pokerino parlors and auction houses to get my hands on a theater.

My break came when my agent took me to a television producer who had a possible part for me. I read the script and liked it, but the producer decided that I was too sophisticated for the part. Then he decided that I wasn't too sophisticated. And so I played the role of a French girl in *L'Amour the Merrier* with Burgess Meredith. The title really goes around the corner for the pun. Translated, it means *Love the Merrier*, which has the merit of making absolutely no sense. The show itself did make sense. It was a good show and after performing in it I discovered that I had become a great success overnight. The day before the show I couldn't find work. The day after I was rejecting offers (for employment, that is).

The night I performed in *L'Amour the Merrier* Dick Rodgers was in conjunction with Pisces. That explains why he was watching television. He saw me and decided that he wanted me for the role of Mignonette in the forthcoming Rodgers-Hammerstein production of *The Happy Time* by Samuel Taylor. A few days later I reported to the stage of the Majestic Theater to read for the role of Mignonette.

The theater, by and large, is no crueler than the Chicago stockyards except when it comes to an audition. Out come actors and actresses, many of whom have been "at liberty" for years. They see their careers slipping away and yet they hang on because they are not happy doing anything else. They come onstage to read a few lines while a mysterious and dimly visible group of judges seated in the darkened theater weigh the evidence. Sometimes the actor or actress will read for a mere thirty seconds, only to hear a voice from the cavern of the theater say, "Thank you very much," meaning, in translation, "You don't get the part." Actors and actresses come across stage like so many sides of beef on tenterhooks while the meat inspectors pass on the quality. The judges themselves don't like it, and Dick Rodgers was always apologetic and uncomfortable at auditions.

When I auditioned I was so frightened I thought I wouldn't have any voice at all. But this is a situation that will never come to pass. I even talk in my sleep. I found my voice, I managed to read, and I got by with my head still on my shoulders. Then I learned I would have to fly to Boston to read for Robert Lewis, the director. In Boston the experience was more intimate and therefore less terrifying.

An audition is frightening not only because of the cold surroundings, the empty theater, the invisible judges. Reading means trying to give a sense of reality to lines taken from the middle of a script without knowing fully the character whose lines you are speak-

ing or the dramatic situation that has developed. I guess I did well enough because Mr. Lewis okayed me, and I was Mignonette.

The playwright originally conceived Mignonette as a French-Canadian maid and quondam acrobat. The part called for an accent. When they heard my accent they all agreed it was good as far as accents go, but if I were to be billed as a French-Canadian the officials might close the border. A simple change in the script solved the problem. The Mignonette who was born French-Canadian suddenly changed into a Hungarian, a change that had no effect on the content of the play. But even as a Hungarian she retained her name, becoming the first Budapester in history to be called Mignonette.

Mignonette is an acrobat who has lost her job. A French family takes her in as a maid. The black sheep of the family, a glamour boy played by Dick Hart, falls in love with her. After the proper complications, some of which would raise the hackles on the 4-H Club, he marries her.

The *Happy Time* company was in rehearsal for four weeks, after which it took to the road for two and a half weeks to be mauled, overhauled, padded, speeded up, slowed down—operations that always take place on the bloody road between Boston and Philadelphia when the show is on the way to town. As we toured we could see the buzzards circling over plays that were dying on the road, and our hearts froze.

The first performance of *The Happy Time* took

place in the Shubert Theater in New Haven, a huge building with seats where once the cows roamed. Far overhead hangs a balcony, stretching back to infinity. The first row orchestra is in New Haven, the last row is in Bangor, Maine.

I was nervous to the point of chattering teeth, and I knew little as yet of the various tricks of the trade whereby an actress adjusts her voice to the demands of the theater. The balcony was two light-years from the stage, and some of the lines I spoke on that memorable opening night haven't yet echoed.

This New Haven opening was a three-act nightmare for me. Just to make me a little more of a wreck, I drew a complete blank onstage in the middle of my big scene. And I didn't have so many big scenes that I could afford to throw one away. To the end of my days I will give thanks to Leora Dana, who played the role of Maman, for shaking me out of my coma by the trick of feeding me lines that brought me back to my part. I survived, and I had the comfortable feeling that, having lived through opening night, I could live through anything.

But I was every bit as scared the second night in New Haven. If this was to be life in the theater, why didn't I go home and lie down on a bed of nails instead? Three New Haven performances, three nightmares. Not until we reached Boston was I able to relax enough to lace my own shoes. I calmed down, and by the time the show reached New York I was even beginning to enjoy myself in a timid sort of way.

On opening night in New York I had the jitters again but they weren't as virulent as they had been in New Haven. Were I to make a comparison, I would say that New Haven was a compound fracture of the leg and New York was a simple fracture.

Much of the story of *The Happy Time* concerned a twelve-year-old boy and his growth into an adult awareness of life and love. Little Johnny Stewart played the role of the boy, Bibi. Johnny was twelve years old, just right for the part, and he did a wonderful job. When he first joined the cast he was a hundred per cent twelve-year-old. That is the stage at which most boys resent mushiness, kissing, and all that sissy stuff. I had to hug and kiss Johnny in a maternal fashion on-stage. Whenever I did I could feel him shrink back as though I were a typhoid carrier.

Then Johnny started to grow at an outrageous rate. Every night he came to the theater a little taller, and every night my hug and embrace looked a little less maternal. Came the day when the costume department had to provide me with new shoes that would add to my height so that I could keep Johnny in his place. But Johnny grew faster than any pair of high heels.

Then another, subtler, change took place in Johnny. Two-Gun Stewart, the cowboy, was giving way to Hot Lips Stewart. He didn't shrink from my embrace the way he used to. He began to like our intimate scenes, and I began to feel a little embarrassed. Was I being maternal or was I contributing to the delinquency of a minor?

Finally poor Johnny literally grew out of his part. We had to let him go and find ourselves a less outsize child.

I still have the inscription Johnny wrote in the bound volume of *The Happy Time*. Among greetings from Claude Dauphin, Dick Hart, and Kurt Kaszner is Johnny's, reading, "Now I am a man. Love."

Everyone in the cast of *The Happy Time* was a very lucky person. People who have been in the theater for thirty years have remarked that never has such a miraculously harmonious company been assembled. This was half the pleasure of working in the show. The raw edges, the short tempers, the petty feuds that usually develop among any group of people who get to know each other's criminal tendencies in a year's time never developed. We all had wings and halos. The atmosphere of mutual love and admiration was positively cloying. Every day was Christmas. Everybody was helpful, no one was jealous. We even tried to help each other get laughs onstage, a reversal of the common practice of putting your head in the hungry actor's mouth just as he is about to deliver his funniest line.

Just to keep up our spirits, Leora Dana married Kurt Kaszner, the man who played the role of the uncle.

We were a party-giving company. If someone sneezed we gave a party in honor of pepper. If someone didn't sneeze we gave a party in honor of his self-control. Every matinee day we held a tea party between the second and third acts. We had something of an international cast and we were expected to give these

teas an international flavor. Claude Dauphin always obliged by supplying the most elaborate and gooiest of French pastries. When Kurt Kasznar's turn came he offered Viennese cakes which, while not as gooey as the Dauphin delicacies, had a much higher specific gravity. After a Dauphin tea I couldn't eat my dinner. After a Kasznar tea I couldn't eat dinner or the next morning's breakfast.

When my turn came I was hard put to give a Hungarian tone to the edibles. Few shops in the theater district offer Hungarian teacakes. (Hungarians don't go in much for afternoon tea.) I solved the problem by preparing small ham and salami sandwiches with lots of whole green peppers on the side. Nothing is more Hungarian than a green pepper. Without peppers the Hungarian people would starve.

The Happy Time convinced me of the great power of television. Although I had such limited experience on the Broadway stage I found that audiences recognized me through my roles in TV. I was not a star in *The Happy Time* but while the play ran *Life* magazine appeared with my face all over the cover. The night after the issue appeared and I made my entrance onstage, Maman (Leora Dana) and Papa (Claude Dauphin) turned their backs to the audience, looked at me cockeyed, and acted as though the Queen had entered. Yet it was not until I played Helena in Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* on television that even the cast of *The Happy Time* considered me an actress rather than a typically pretty ingénue.

While with *The Happy Time* I always came to the theater at seven o'clock just for the pleasure of visiting with the rest of the company for an hour before curtain time. The show ran for a year and a half. I left before it closed to take advantage of new opportunities for wider experience. My leave-taking was a blubbery affair. I played my last performance with a wet, soggy face.

At the end of its New York run the show was re-cast for the road. After a brief tour it reached Chicago, where it had nothing like its New York reception. I am convinced that part of the reason for the show's success in New York was the contagious harmony of the cast itself, a harmony and warmth that could not be duplicated.

Oh, for another such happy time!

Uncle Vanya's T-Zone

LOOK INTO THE SKY and think about television. It is hard to believe that delicate high-frequency waves carry on their bosom such cargo as Milton Berle, Lauritz Melchior, Kate Smith, and Howdy Doody. If you watch at the full of the moon, when the lonely baying of the sponsor pierces the night, you may see a television antenna reach out to snatch one of these characters from the ether, squeeze him through the lead-in, and push him into your living room.

So much for the purely technical aspects of television. We turn now to more personal matters.

If someone were to tell me that television is not always a perfect cultural medium, that blood flows freely in all the channels, that actors die violently every half hour on the hour while the rest of the cast serves tea on the corpse, or that children are overstimulated by the assorted examples of mayhem and arson and the cowboys who neglect the herd to break furniture over each

other's head, I would have to agree. Facts are facts.

At the same time I look warily at the television snobs, the people who proclaim loudly that they are far too superior to look at anything that comes out of a picture tube. Television, according to them, is amusement for the low-brow, the poor untutored lout who doesn't mind sitting in his living room to watch a dramatic performance or a comedian in preference to sharpening his mental ax to split an intellectual hair.

When you meet such a person he immediately takes the offensive by informing you, "I've never seen you on television." For this he expects the Congressional Medal of Honor.

You answer mildly, "Really?"

Is the subject dropped? No indeed! You have to listen to this joker whether you want to or not. "Don't have a television set," he proclaims with his chin thrust out four inches, waiting for you to strike the first blow. He then expects you to ask the sucker question, "Why not?" because he has a fifteen-minute answer all prepared. But you're too smart for him. You refuse to oblige. You know by this time that he's going to continue anyway.

"Don't have a set," he repeats. "Wouldn't have one in the house. Why should I buy a set when I can get a mad dog just as cheap?" Now he chortles. "Did you read where that fellow pulled out a revolver and shot his television set right in the midriff? Ha-ha! Right in the midriff!"

H-h-h

Then he informs you that everything on television is scaled to meet the moral and intellectual requirements of the two-toed sloth. He implies that you, as a television actress, are an unspeakably corrupt thing who properly belongs in the Tower of London with your head tucked underneath your arm.

This sort of television snob would have you believe that he, to steal a sentiment from Shaw, lives his life like a hairdresser in the eternal contemplation of beauty.

The most fascinating thing about these television snobs is their habits. These are the fellows who are always reading mystery books "for relaxation" because it has become the thing for intellectuals to read whodunits "for relaxation." (I read them for relaxation, too, but I don't make like I spend the rest of my time studying Kant.) These are also the fellows who, strangely enough, are movie fans and will duck into any theater any time to see anything. And just to top it off they are the manic devotees of the new cult of the comic strip. All these guys have some favorite comic strip which they describe in terms of Swift or Shaw or Gogol, not at all embarrassed by their outrageous comparisons.

Come now! There's plenty wrong with television, not least of which is that great insult to America: the jingle. But what theatrical convention is more compelling than that governing the television wrestling match? Here are two gentlemen on the bulbous side, bearded and marcelled, drenched in eau de cologne,

who play their stately roles with the gentle dignity of a Chinese classic. And highly skilled they are, too, for it must take years of devotion to train bodies to survive the explosive assaults they suffer.

But best of all is the wrestling audience as it claps and cheers and solemnly accepts the convention that all this is real, knowing in their heart of hearts that, when the Indian Chief rushes from the ring and returns with the fire ax to belabor his opponent, the action is not completely spontaneous. And what of the villain who slinks to his corner of the ring, soaks a handkerchief in a liquid poured from a bottle bearing the huge label, CHLOROFORM, and then prepares his opponent for an appendectomy? How quickly chloroform knits up the raveled sleeve of care! Is there not something in this akin to the Greek drama where fate stalks the protagonists?

No, there isn't, but it's fun.

I can even watch ball games with a certain fascination, although to this day I have never been able to figure out who is doing what to whom in a ball park. I know the names of a few players. I have even met some and been surprised to find that they don't wear their knickerbockers in the street.

Granted that television isn't everything it could be, neither is the average plate of soup. Isn't the good thing really rare in every medium: movies, radio, theater? And a discriminating viewer can find plenty of fascinating material on television, ranging from the proceeds of the UN to some excellent plays that

feature the best acting talent in America. TV has lots that's mediocre, lots that's downright bad—but it has also offered performers like Helen Hayes, Maurice Evans, Barry Jones, and Lee Grant; playwrights like Shaw and Chekhov and Shakespeare; composers like Puccini and Verdi.

It seems to me that the snobs who boycott television are just as responsible for its quality as anyone else.

I had not been long with *The Happy Time* when a television agent called me to suggest that I sign with her. In America children have agents instead of god-parents. Now I have agents to deal with the agents of other people. Everybody gets a commission on everybody else. People who grow up without agents become lonely, crabbed, and eccentric. An agent is someone you can't get along without whom nobody needs. (This sentence is a direct translation from the Hungarian.)

When the agent propositioned me I was in a position to pooh-pooh her, and pooh-pooh her I did. But her call convinced me that anyone who wants a career in television should go on the stage, and anyone who wants a career on the stage should go into television. This is a sure-fire formula that's never been known to fail.

Six months later my attitude toward television underwent a see change. It began to dawn on me that *The Happy Time*, for all its splendid qualities, would not last forever. This time I took the initiative and called the television agent. I said that I had recon-

sidered her previous offer and was no longer a pooh-pooh of television. I had also got wind of the dirty rumor that money lay in careless piles around the television studios. I wanted a few bags of it. In pursuit of this high aim I signed away part of my life, most of my sleep, and all of my talent to the agent.

I began to play many rôles in television. Meanwhile some press agents had discovered that the Gabors were good cheesecake. (Lindy's has the only good cheesecake in America because Lindy is really a Hungarian named Franz Liszt.) This discovery inspired some of the most feverish publicity since Barnum went to the Greatest Heaven on Earth. I was a "glamour girl" and press agents attached opinions to me the way children pin tails on a donkey.

While *The Happy Time* was running I often rushed off to fulfill television commitments before and after curtain times. Guest spots were offered me frequently, possibly because of my ornamental value, and I appeared on such blockbusters as *Leave It to the Girls*, a program devoted to the battle of the sexes in which the men usually came off third best. I eased into the routine of doing guest shots at a moment's notice.

Once my agent told me I had been offered the part of Helena in the television production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. I balked. I thought of all the famous actors and actresses who have played Chekhov, and I decided that this was out of my league. Then the agent said, "Eva, think it over and read the play again."

That night I went to bed with Anton Chekhov. I

had read and seen *Uncle Vanya* many times before, but reading a play for the possible purpose of taking a role in it is different from reading it for pleasure. I studied *Uncle Vanya*. I was still disturbed by the idea of playing in it.

In the morning I had a cup of coffee and a fresh look at Uncle. Then I said to myself, "Eva, what are you worried about? Don't let Anton Chekhov bulldoze you. It's just a play about two men who are after a girl, and one of them gets her."

Put that way, *Uncle Vanya* was no longer so remote.

I took the part and I was privileged to play in it with Boris Karloff, Walter Abel, and Leora Dana (who was Maman in *The Happy Time*). In *The Happy Time*, in which Leora had the bigger role, I helped her with her fast changes. In *Uncle Vanya*, where I was top banana, she helped me peel.

I had never before met Boris Karloff without the nuts and bolts on his face. I found him a quiet man, unusually mild in manner, who never ate so much as a smidgen of human flesh.

We rehearsed *Uncle Vanya* for ten days, Leora and I going over our material between acts at the theater. On the night that we played *Uncle Vanya* the entire cast of *The Happy Time* gathered before the television set in my house to watch Leora and me perform.

By this time I was enough of a television personality to attract the interest of sponsors. Businessmen about to enter television are bred for certain characteristics just as the Miura bulls are bred for the ring. The aver-

age prospective sponsor is quite childish about someone like myself who is booked, for better or worse, as a "glamour girl." My, how they want to tell their friends that they had cocktails with Eva Gabor! And if they use the occasion to needle the Little Woman, who can deny them some good clean fun?

Once four associated sponsors who wanted me for a show proposed cocktails during which we could flirt with terms and make a shy pass at a contract. By this time I knew that if I had a contract for every martini with a potential sponsor I would now own Barbara Hutton and all her accessories. An agent's main function is to put the cocktails after the contract. At this point in the negotiations, or skirmishes, my agent earned the Croix de guerre and two more pints of blood. She explained to the panting corporation that I was a very busy woman with little time to recline on Turkish pillows and swill martinis. But, she said, if these gentlemen signed a contract Miss Gabor would be happy to invite them, product and all, to her apartment for cocktails.

They signed. We had the cocktails, and there I was, the star of a television show.

Then came the next battle. We had to convince our sponsors that it is *de trop* (Hungarian for too damn much) to devote twelve minutes of a fifteen-minute show to a panegyric in iambic pentameter praising The Product. We had to hack at that commercial, tearing off a minute here, amputating a second there. (Little does the public know how TV actors fight for them!)

We had to do everything but present signed affidavits that the audience would turn us off if we tried to get away with their outlandish proposals. Finally, we won.

Some time later I found myself boss of an interview show—the Eva Gabor Show. It was born when the television interview was still reasonably fresh, and television directors were a vivid green. Yet even then interview shows were so common that, having interviewed Presidents, all of Congress, every governor, actor, ballplayer, and author, the harassed emcees took to inviting each other as guests. All America had become one mutual interview. Opinions clashed with the violent shock of a feather dropping on a bale of cotton. People slapped each other's backs so heartily that the noise blew out a lot of picture tubes.

My interview show was as good as the next. That just about sums it up. Yet I gave the show devoted attention, prepared the interviews with extreme care, determined to give the sponsors everything they had bargained for.

My agent and everyone else connected with the first Eva Gabor Show assured me that there was nothing to it. Just fifteen-minute interviews preceded by thirty leisurely minutes of rehearsal. My first guest was Richard Hart, my leading man in *The Happy Time*, and he made the send-off easy for me. Phil Matthias, the assistant stage manager of *The Happy Time*, became my director, hand-holder, and psychoanalyst.

The show had only one drawback: it almost made a wreck of me. It went on at 8 P.M. on Fridays and lasted

till eight-fifteen. That left me exactly thirty minutes to leave the studio, race back to the theater, dress, and be on stage when the curtain rose on *The Happy Time*. This made my TV show a real ulcer foundry. I worked out a system with the help of some loyal friends. First came a few minutes of intense prayer during which I called on heaven to keep the traffic down. Then I raced from the studio to an elevator which waited for me. Below, poised for action, a friend sat at the steering wheel of his Ford. The door was open and ready. I would yell "Thank you" to the elevator man, scramble into the Ford, and fly down to Broadway and Forty-fifth Street, where a traffic cop named Frank always cleared a path for me. Then to my dressing room to swallow the container of chocolate malted that served as dinner, change my make-up, get out of my evening gown and into the maid's dress, and make my entrance as Mignonette, externally calm but full of internal rubble.

The Eva Gabor television show had its rough spots. Once an actress who appeared as my guest told me before the show that this was her very first television appearance. Consequently I opened the program by saying to the audience, "I really feel proud that my guest chose my show for her first television appearance." To this she replied sweetly, "But, Eva, this isn't my first television appearance. I've been in television many times before."

I'd like to live that one all over again. Now I've got the third line all prepared.

The ideal guest on an interview show is a woman like Aline Bernstein, probably New York's number one theatrical costume expert. Aline talks fluently and wittily—a wonderful combination. When she was my guest I had to interrupt once in a while just to keep my oar in. Otherwise I sat back and enjoyed myself.

Interviewing is not always that easy. Now and then a problem child comes along such as the young society woman, figureheading an important charity, whom I was to interview as part of a philanthropic campaign. When she appeared I wanted desperately to go back to the good old days of radio. She was nicely groomed—a boiled owl in an evening dress. She had just eaten twelve olives but in order to get at them she had had to drink the martinis. When she spoke it sounded as though her tongue were four inches thick and made of the finest felt. Furthermore, she sported a disastrous sway, so that even though I propped her up carefully before we went on camera, I expected that at any minute she would fall face forward to the uncarpeted studio floor. And what did I want with her teeth?

I had to do almost all the talking. Now and then I had to let her say a word or two, but I kept interrupting at just the moment when one of her tongue twisters was about to get caught in the microphone.

Well, I made it. After the show I discovered that my audience was completely unaware of the problem, though some of the viewers opined that the young lady was sloppy.

On another occasion I interviewed a well-known

actor. We were seated side by side on a comfortable sofa. At least it was comfortable when we sat down. Then I was horrified to notice that he was leering at me and inching over my way. We were on camera, and while I have had to rebuff advances on other occasions, never had I been faced with doing the job before such a large audience. This was the first sponsored rebuff in television history.

The sofa grew smaller and suddenly, in the midst of the interview, he put his arm around my waist and flashed what he must have supposed was an ingratiating smile. I put on my best calm and gracious look as I tried to wriggle away from the octopus. Then I gave up my subtleties and simply shoved him back to his end of the couch, pretending that this was gay banter and all in fun. He returned to the attack, but by this time I was prepared, and whenever he got close enough for me to feel his hot breath, I gave him another shove.

Sometimes I invited young singers, unknowns, to appear on my show and do a song. When these auditions took place I would sit back and listen, trying to look like a connoisseur and thinking to myself, "Isn't this ridiculous? Who am I to audition these kids anyway? Won't anyone see through me?" Some people did.

My most difficult interview from the viewpoint of interviewing technique was with a New York City commissioner. I hadn't prepared properly. I didn't know what he was a commissioner of. I knew he would turn out to be a mammal but this thought gave small

comfort. I had an idea that he ran around the streets tightening the valves on fire hydrants, emptying the trash cans with the letters D.S.N.Y. (which I always think is Walt Disney's signature), and catching stray cats and dogs. And so my first questions were vague. I think he must have realized that I didn't know to whom I was talking because he saved me by launching into a lecture on old-law tenements, slum clearance, and housing projects. Later he drove me to the East Side to illustrate what he had been talking about.

Someone else catches the cats and dogs. It must be the mayor.

The Eva Gabor Show lasted a year and a half. It was hard work because I had to do most of the organizing myself. But the experience was good. I learned lesson number one of the interviewer's art: let the other fellow do the work. Since then I've tried to apply that lesson in as many other fields as possible.

Drifting down the Channels

WHILE ALL THIS went on the Gabors continued to get the business in the press. I felt like an exhibit in a zoo. The glamour angle got me down. I was tired of eating caviar when I wanted hot dogs. I was ready to swap ermine for dungarees. (Don't mail the dungarees yet.)

Here's how the publicity works. When my sister Zsa Zsa opened in a new television show on the West Coast a national magazine filled a page with her pretty picture and the headline: "ANOTHER GABOR. Zsa Zsa Moves in on Eva's TV Field."

I was on the East Coast. Zsa Zsa was on the West Coast. Neither of us had a network show. We couldn't compete if we wanted to. Television is "my" field in the same sense that the Chase National is "my" bank. The idea that Zsa Zsa was moving in on me, or that I had any reason to resent it, was ridiculous.

Zsa Zsa, I will say, had a bright and amusing show

called Bachelor's Haven. Many men took advantage of the show's invitation to write Zsa Zsa for advice. They submitted questions or requests for counsel ranging from the sage to the silly. Zsa Zsa's answers stayed within the same range, but they were usually rather amusing. One gentleman wrote to her to complain that he had given his fiancée a ring, a pin, black lingerie, some china, a stove, and a bed. Then she broke the engagement and refused to return any of these trifles. It was Zsa Zsa's opinion that the young woman ought to return the stove.

Any guy who demands the return of black lingerie would wash and iron his paper money.

It was at this time that I opened a local newspaper to find myself spread over eight columns, bosom down on a bed, resting my chin on my left hand. Over this fairly decent likeness of me was inscribed the legend: "THIS GIRL WANTS A HUSBAND WHO'LL BE BOSS." The accompanying copy referred to me as "the baby" and "this rich dish."

While I was allegedly looking for some man to maltreat me, a columnist declared, with that peculiar authority you find in someone who is always wrong, that I was writing and producing my own television show in New York. This item appeared on the West Coast, a safe distance from the truth. Another columnist whispered hoarsely that Paul and I were madly in love and were soon to marry. The Paul in question was a nice guy I knew. He took me to dinner twice. The most romantic gesture he ever made was to help me on

with my coat, and that was simply a matter of quid pro quo, since I had helped him on with his. Although he never proposed to me, he later married three other women.

All this misinformation was a good sign. It meant that I had arrived in television. I was worth misinforming people about. Other honors were soon to come my way. Who can imagine the virginal joy with which I received the news that I was to be "Miss Valen-Tie of 1951"? This honor, complete with the full-berried bay-leaf crown, came to me via the Men's Tie Foundation, which, in a great expression of democracy in action, selected me to be the nation's one and only Miss Valen-Tie. As such I was mugged for 100,000 pieces of printed material, and men choked on my likeness in 28,000 retail stores. In its letter to me the Men's Tie Foundation remarked that "a great deal of publicity through the trade press, consumer magazines, daily papers and radio will be geared around you as Miss Valen-Tie."

Before all this ended I was convinced that the nation's economy was based on my photograph and that if I should lose my front teeth the Board of Trade would close the stock market until the dentist finished the plate.

My public debut as Miss Valen-Tie took place in the retailers' Valhalla, the Astor Roof, on September 27, 1951. The schools will hereafter be closed on that date.

This, too, helped my career. My advice to any young woman who wants regular television commitments is

to be Miss Valen-Tie. My own success in carrying off my Miss Valen-Tiehood with such élan inspired a shoe company to invite me to be a member of their fashion council, which was to meet in executive session whenever Halley's comet dropped by. In return for this backbreaking service they would advertise my likeness in national magazines and send me packing cases full of shoes every week. I said no just in time to avoid being Miss Half Sole of 1952.

As my television commitments grew I still took time off to maintain my connections with the theater, touring on the road with *Her Cardboard Lover*, driving my secretary crazy, sleeping in Memphis fleabags. (Complaints from the Memphis Chamber of Commerce should be addressed to the Museum of Modern Art.)

Once a television actress who had her own show called me at the hotel and asked me to be her guest. Naturally I accepted. Then she gave me a bit of advice. "Eva darling," she said, "please remember that my show is rather conservative. Don't wear anything extreme. A simple dress and not much jewelry."

Although it was difficult to picture the home folks, kiddies and all, clustered around the TV set to await this particular show, which leaned rather heavily on the proposition that there are two excited sexes, I obliged. Nothing more demure than I had been seen since the last grand conclave of the Salvation Army. My only lapse was my failure to drive to the studio in an Edison electric. But my hostess, I mournfully report, was not dressed for the Sunday school taffy pull. She awaited

me in a subversive décolleté with some six square feet of exposed epidermis. It was the historic meeting of Cleopatra and Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.

The program began with my hostess giving a demonstration that she is no mean talker. I stood there in my middy, high button shoes, and red flannel underwear, waiting my turn. It never came. I would still be waiting if I had not interrupted at one point to say, "Now you keep quiet and let me talk."

Naturally she has her own version of this story. If she wants to tell it, let her write her own book.

I went back to my hotel with my hair smoking. She had played the game with two aces up her sleeve—no mean trick for a woman without sleeves. As I thought about my righteous cause I grew angrier and angrier. After all, I had been fond of that actress, and I thought she went out of her way to make me play second fiddle.

Then I thought it over for a while. My temperature dropped, my pulse slowed down, my respiration returned to normal. I said to myself, "Eva, aren't you being a wee bit of a damn fool? Life doesn't consist of a glamour contest with another actress."

This incident gave me more perspective than you can find in the Museum of Modern Art. (Those who wish to take issue with my position on the Museum of Modern Art may write to Mr. Anthony.) I realized then that if, as the astronomers so cheerfully suggest, there is no good reason why the sun should not someday explode, the dress I wore on that show will leave history undisturbed.

On went my television career. With the grim inevitability of Oedipus going blindly to his doom, the second Eva Gabor Show began to materialize. By then the interview business was running out of gas. The audience had heard so many foolish answers to so many foolish questions!

In my second show I was to play the role of famous women of history, monologuing my way along for fifteen minutes while doing costume changes and submitting to televised hairdressings. We were a long time hitting on this format. It proved to be moderately successful but the show had a piggy-bank budget. In order to eliminate a director, the man who was to appear with me had his role reduced to that of an Off-Stage Voice which broke in like a Greek chorus and made me drop *The Product*.

The opening show went well with me in the role of Marie Antoinette, the cake lady. Afterward we had the usual sponsors' party. Everyone was excited and happy. The sponsors saw before them new horizons of art. They gripped my hand and assured me that I had again saved the nation from economic collapse. The old Valen-Tie feeling suffused me.

The ad men joined us at that party. Everybody makes a great fuss about ad men, and now I want to get into the act. All ad men are \$10,000-a-year men. This is a magic category superior to \$9000-a-year men or even \$12,000-a-year men. Ad men sit around conference tables for hours, discussing slogans and matching wits against the three-year-olds who listen to the

kiddy programs. Now and then the ad men actually outwit the tots, and this makes them preen like male peacocks on a warm spring day.

While the ad men have conferences the sponsor crouches in his concrete emplacement behind his machine gun to guard the jingle. Should a sponsor walk in on an ad men's conference the chief ad man cries, "Hats off! The sponsor's passing by!" Immediately all the ad men leap to attention and blanch. Their ulcers become overactive and eat out the intestinal wall at a furious rate. The sponsor scowls and someone faints.

The day after the big party, at which both sponsors and ad men congratulated me, the ad men returned wearing long and rather unattractive faces. "Miss Gabor," they said in their boys'-choir voices, "we're in terrible, terrible trouble." I wondered: had the stock market crashed after all? "What's wrong?" I asked merrily. They told me that the sponsors were worried, and when the sponsors worried, they worried. "Why are the sponsors worried?" I asked, pointing out that only last night they were happy as dolphins playing in a sea of money.

"We're in terrible, terrible trouble," they repeated. I gave them each a beaker of iron and liver extract. Thus fortified, they told me the grim story. One of the more important sponsors had returned home after the previous night's celebration and spoken to the young woman who operated the house elevator. She had seen the show. And she hadn't liked it. He went upstairs,

swallowed a gross of nembutal, and slept the sleep of the fussed.

This is the statistical approach to television, the Hooper rating approach in reverse. One of anything, to a sponsor or ad man, symbolizes millions. One elevator operator is the Grass Roots, the voice of America. When you realize that a sponsor may come across four elevator operators in one morning, each with a different opinion that completely unsettles him, you will understand why psychiatry is big business. Fundamentally, a sponsor or ad man values no opinion so little as his own.

It must have been about this time that I endorsed a product. Many other companies make a similar product, but my product made me robust and cheerful and filled my blood stream with chlorophyll. Since I endorsed that product I can appear on no programs sponsored by rival companies. The other companies hate me. I'm a traitor. They won't let me have their lollipops.

Then I endorsed a second product in another field. Now I am persona non grata to rival companies in that field as well.

This is a self-defeating process. If I endorse enough products I can work my way right out of television and into the poorhouse.

But this is all part of my Art. Somehow, sometimes, I manage to get the chance to act amid all this. Acting is the meat in this particular sandwich. Slowly but surely I'm managing to do more of it with less of the

slightly maniacal accompaniments. That's why I like my corner in bedlam.

I even had fun on the Milton Berle show when I was his guest. A rehearsal with Milton Berle is the television artist's version of basic training. Berle works at an insane pace, driving himself to bed with fatigue so that he can recuperate enough to exhaust himself again. You need leather lungs, iron feet, an alligator hide, and a contempt for life to work with the man. He yells. He screams. He tears his hair (a real extravagance in his condition). He gnashes his teeth. He even—you'll have to believe this because it's true—he even pulls out a whistle and blows it like a scoutmaster calling the troops. At every crisis out comes the whistle and the migraine bursts into bloom. These crises are as regular as Old Faithful. You can bring tourists in to witness them. They explode every two minutes, Bulova Watch Time. (For this plug I want a free watch.)

I know of no man who can make you contemplate the shortness of life more intensely than Milton Berle.

Yet I'll make one admission—reluctantly, believe me. I played very broad burlesque on the Berle show, something in the prat-fall tradition, a type of acting I had never before attempted. After the show, people told me that I was quite funny. I carried off the broad stuff very well. I guess I'll have to record that I never could have done it if Berle hadn't whipped me, bullied me, screamed at me, and blown his tin whistle at me.

After six months of bed rest, absolute quiet, and lots of milk, I had my nerves under control again.

As I write this I am about to return to the legitimate stage, this time on Broadway. I don't know whether my show will last two days or two years. But I'm not leaving television. As television tries to solve its basic problem—what to put on between commercials—I want to be right there with it. It gives an actress something she cannot have on the stage: variety, new challenges, many roles. Television has no such thing as a flop that leaves you nowhere or a hit that ties you too long to one part.

Every night is a one-night stand. But think of all the nights in the year!

On the Road

IN HOLLYWOOD I did plays in local theaters, usually for limited runs of six weeks. I played in Schnitzler's *Affairs of Anatol*, the Wodehouse-Geyer play, *Candlelight*, and in Ferenc Molnar's *The Play's the Thing*. My experience with these plays convinced me that being stage-struck is different from being movie-struck. It's the difference between sacred and profane love. I would have done on stage for fifty cents things I would not do in the movies for ten thousand dollars. (Make that nine thousand.)

Summer stock and the road were perpetual work and perpetual vacation perfectly combined. I have a scrapbook and the best thing in that scrapbook, aside from good notices, is a big cardboard star, my very first, taken from the door of my dressing room in the East Hampton theater where I made my modest Long Island debut as the feminine lead in *Her Cardboard Lover*

I even enjoy my painful memories of the road and stock. The beginning of my first summer stock tour was typical. The tag "glamour girl" implied that being glamorous was the limit of my accomplishments. My agent offered me around to various summer theaters on a star basis. She asked for a plump salary. Some directors and managers were polite, others giggled, and a Newport woman said bluntly, "Why, last summer I could have got Eva Gabor to come up here for seventy-five dollars a week and a pack of bubble gum, and now you're multiplying that by the national deficit. You must be demented."

Finally Phil Barry, Jr., the playwright's son and manager of the East Hampton theater, took a chance on me and saved my agent's good name. He gave me a contract almost as good as the one my agent first proposed. I opened in *Her Cardboard Lover* to a full house, and during the period of my tenancy the theater did excellent business. I had earned my keep.

East Hampton is a pleasant little Long Island town, distinguished by neither size nor extent of industry. Yet what an inadequate description that is, for East Hampton happens to be the first place in the world where I was a star, a real star with a star pasted on her dressing-room door and her name featured on the theater marquee. When I first drove past the theater, before the play opened, and saw my name up there, I let out happy cry number 12A, complete with racking sobs. And what a responsibility I felt! Mine was a position of public trust. Thousands depended upon me.

On my slim shoulders lay the future of the American theater.

That summer a well-known young actor, also handled (in a professional way) by my agent, was scheduled to appear in Rhode Island. At the very last moment this actor reneged, putting everyone on the spot. The theater manager blew a gasket. He called my agent and begged her to supply another star. She suggested me. The manager groaned and repeated, "I want a star."

My agent suggested me again.

"You've got me over a barrel," he complained.

"Nonsense!" she replied. "Call East Hampton and find out how Eva did."

He called East Hampton, and when he hung up I had a contract for Rhode Island.

This manager later confessed that I did the best business of the season for him. I told him he ought to spend more time over a barrel.

In both East Hampton and Rhode Island the theater management provided the cast of *Her Cardboard Lover* with a house for living quarters. We ate and argued as a unit, never losing a certain festive spirit. Summer stock is fun because summer audiences are good audiences. They are, by and large, winter audiences on vacation, but the sun has drawn the vinegar out of them. The jaundiced eye and the I.R.T. pallor disappear and they are so proud of their second-degree sunburns that you'd never believe they were in pain. The theaters have a holiday atmosphere, a smell of the

ocean and damp wood, the happy cry of the termites, faces radiant with sun-tan lotion and peeling schnozzles. No one comes to the theater with ragged nerves after spending three hours trying to park the car. When the final curtain descends the audience pours out to look at Mars overhead rather than the Brighton Express beneath.

But summer audiences are not uncritical. They will criticize every bit as severely as December playgoers, but they won't be so awfully unhappy about it, nor will they go home, take out pencil and paper, and figure out all the smart things they could have done with the six-sixty they spent on tickets.

The moral is that actors should work all year and audiences should have vacations all year. This is the reverse of the present situation.

In winter stock I alternated between *Her Cardboard Lover*, Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, and *Candlelight*, in each of which I had a very different role. We presented one play and rehearsed another every week.

My Hollywood experience on the stage had prepared me for a certain number of crises, not all of them strictly dramatic. When I played in *The Affairs of Anatol* I had a really luscious entrance, coming on stage in a beautiful white flowing evening gown made of whipped cream and music. I was still at the point in my career when I thought that a good entrance was all an actress needed: the rest would take care of itself. One night I made my beautiful entrance, and as I was walking across the stage showing my personality, some-

thing snapped. It was the hook in back of the dress, the hook on which all else depended. Had the dress been designed differently I might have carried it off by never turning my back or my profile to the audience, but without this hook the top half of the dress would collapse and leave me far too informal from the waist up.

Philip Merivale, gallant gentleman, rushed to my rescue. He tried to fix the hook on stage, but he brought to the task more good will than skill. Good will alone has never held anybody's dress up. The more he tried, with his ten stiff thumbs, the louder the audience laughed. He quit trying just before the theater fell apart. One more minute and we would have been ready for the Union City burlesque.

I played the entire act holding onto the top of the strapless gown in the attitude of a fully dressed September Morn.

That was not the only dress to be cruel to me. In Memphis, where I played in *Candlelight*, I had practically the same experience, but this time the gremlin was a zipper in back which zipped down with a faint romantic murmur when I sighed a faint romantic sigh. That made the second full act I had to play while holding onto my dignity with both hands.

In *Her Cardboard Lover* I had a serious run-in with an unmanageable member of the cast. This actor was a dog named Muffet, my black poodle. "Lovable" is all you can say about Muffet. She was not pretty. She was not smart. And she was all ham. Muffet had her

own dressing kennel and even a notice in the playing script reading *Warn Muffet* when her cue approached.

In the play a man hands me the dog as a gift. I say the appropriate words of thanks, cuddle the poodle in my arms, and play with it. In the first few performances Muffet was a real Sarah Bernhardt except for her ears. But one night after I received the dog and held her in my arms she decided that she was restless. Without warning she suddenly leaped down, sauntered to the footlights, quietly surveyed the audience, and then yawned in the most insulting fashion. In the play I had just received the dog and had not yet named her. I tried calling her with a piece of brilliant ad-libbing. "Doggy!" I cried, selecting this unusual name on the spur of the moment. "Here, Doggy! Here!" But Muffet was used to being called Muffet—not Doggy. She glared at me contemptuously and turned back to the audience. I tried the "Here, Doggy," once more. The danger point was near. The audience was being very nice, but one or two more "Here, Doggies," and we could all go home.

With what I assumed was great dignity I sauntered up to the dog, intending to enfold her gently in my arms before giving her a taste of the bull whip when the show was over. Muffet would have none of this. Every time I came close she walked away. Finally I said to myself, "Enough of this," threw my dignity out the window, and chased the damn animal. After a brief run I caught her by the tail—and the audience burst into deafening applause.

That was Muffet's only descent from grace. She turned out to be an excellent trouper. She loved applause, and when we took curtain calls, the more the audience clapped the more she wagged her tail.

Poor Muffet! After the show closed she spent all her time hanging around casting offices, and she wasted away to a Mexican hairless.

Actors and actresses are fun because they enjoy their work, and when people enjoy their work they are enjoying a mighty big hunk of life. I met only one exception to this rule: an actor who played a role in *Her Cardboard Lover*. He was the only actor I ever knew who didn't seem to like acting. He had only one ambition: to end the tour. He would check off the weeks and each week he would say, "Thank God, that's gone by!" He made me think of all the guys who wanted work in the theater and couldn't get it, all the youngsters who would give their eyeteeth for a chance at a road tour, and then I looked at him and got sore.

Yet I have the knack of forgetting unpleasant experiences. I have to dig deep to recall them. Only by concentrating do I remember a certain director in Memphis who wanted to redirect my performance in a play in which I had already worked out my role. He wanted it his way, I wanted it my way, and I was more reasonable because you can't take a play on tour and change it into something new for each town. Well, he did a job on me. It's easy to reduce me to tears, but he didn't do it the easy way. He gave me such an emotional beating as I have seldom had, and when he finished I stag-

gered to my hotel room, locked myself in, and tried to paste myself together. When I had achieved a reasonable facsimile of myself I put it on the stage and tried to act. I knew that the director was out front, hoping the play would lay an egg to prove him right. The play laid no egg. Lucky for him, too, for if it had, I would have thrown it at him.

Of all my mishaps on stage, none compares with an incident in Falmouth. Falmouth is a lovely town on Cape Cod where *Her Cardboard Lover* had a brief run. The second act of *Her Cardboard Lover* opened with me on stage alone, relaxing in an armchair and reading a magazine. I flip a page or two, my husband enters, I slap his face, and the plot thickens. One moonlit night in Falmouth the second-act curtain went up, I flipped the page of the magazine, and I waited. And waited. And waited. No husband. I flipped another page, rustling it as loudly as I decently could. Still nothing happened. Since this was not Hamlet, an extended soliloquy would have been out of place. I flipped still another page. Never in my life have I wanted to see a man as much as I wanted to see that actor.

A wee bit of hysteria began to creep up on me. Out front were approximately a thousand people who thought I ought to do something or say something. To watch a woman read a magazine is not exciting drama.

Then I put down the magazine, undulated toward a dressing table, and combed my hair. There's a little more action in hair combing than in magazine reading,

but it's still not Ibsen. By now I was really worried about the actor who played my husband. Had he drowned? If so, it served him right for swimming between acts.

Then I had an inspiration. I rang for the maid. Fortunately the play calls for a maid. I could speak to her, which was more than I could say for the comb or the magazine. She entered at once, bless her soul, and I declaimed, "Where is Monsieur André?"

She, stout trouper that she was, said encouragingly, "He is on his way, madame."

"On his way?" I repeated, milking this brilliant conversation.

"Yes, on his way," she reassured me.

"Thank you," I replied in stirring tones. "Please tell him to hurry up. You are sure he is on his way, aren't you?"

"Yes, madame, I am sure he is on his way."

"I am glad he is on his way," I said.

"He is on his way but I will tell him to hurry up," she promised again. Then, having no further excuse to remain on stage, she exited. How I hated to see her go! There I was, all alone again.

At last the door opened and in walked my beamish husband, Monsieur André. The script called for me to greet him with a slap in the face. Usually I slapped just loud enough to give the audience the general idea without disturbing his molars. That night I opened with a left jab and followed it up with a right cross that landed right on the button. I socked him so hard that

the audience gasped. He himself was too shocked to speak for the moment.

It wasn't fair of me to sock him so hard, particularly since the script didn't allow him to defend himself, but I was so nervous by that time that I had to relieve my feelings. As it turned out it was the fault of our usually faultless stage manager. He had simply forgotten to inform Monsieur André that the curtain was up. Monsieur was taking his ease in the dressing room, his stocking feet on the table and a can of cold beer in his good right hand.

I later found out that I had spent five full minutes on that stage, a period broken only by the blessed interlude of the maid. Five minutes alone on stage, with nothing to do, is the equivalent of a century, particularly if you can't juggle or play a musical saw.

It was torture then, but later I was rather proud of the incident. It gave me the impression that Eva Gabor was a real old trouper.

Ten Irishmen and One Play

TWO SPRINGS AGO I flew to Hollywood for a ten-day rest. There Kurt Kaszner, formerly of *The Happy Time*, gave a party attended by Mel Ferrer. Mel told me he had a play for which he thought I was right. I said nothing doing. I didn't have a spare minute, and I had a twelve-week tour coming up.

Mel didn't try to pressure me. He just told me to take the script home and read it that night.

I read it. In the morning I decided to cancel four weeks of my tour and do the play. It was called *Strike a Match*. For the cast Mel had assembled ten Irish males and one Hungarian female (me). We all flew to La Jolla, where Mel had his tryout theater.

Our star was Pat O'Brien, a warm guy who after two minutes of chitchat convinced me that I had known him all his life. Then came Richard Egan (my love interest in the play), Tom Brown, Pat Collins, and six other Gaelic guys. Never has such an experienced cast been so green.

They were the wildest, best-natured, happiest bunch of men I ever worked with. Every last one of them bounced like a rubber ball. You couldn't tire them. You couldn't depress them. I couldn't understand this. After all, what fun can people get out of life unless they're depressed now and then? They made me feel like a hopelessly moody Magyar.

We rehearsed, day and night, for ten days while Mel Ferrer, the director, bullied us into shape. He worked like a maniac, rehearsing us up to the very limits permitted by Equity, and now and then a teentsy-weentsy little bitsy more. Yet he made me learn. You have to learn when you work with Mel Ferrer or he'll bang your head on the pavement. He was tough, yes, but he was also helpful and kind. I find that tough people who have a justifiable confidence in their own talent are always the most helpful. Only those who are unsure of themselves are afraid to help others professionally.

Mel and I had our troubles. He kept demanding more of me than I felt equipped to give (theatrically speaking), but little by little he made me better whether I wanted to be or not.

When we opened in La Jolla the play was ready but I wasn't. It received mixed notices. My first two or three performances were weak. ("Weak" is a Hungarian word meaning lousy.) Then I caught up with the rest of the cast.

Phil Barry, Jr., flew to La Jolla to have a look at *Strike a Match* with the idea of bringing it to Broadway. But neither he nor Mel thought it was yet up to

Broadway standards. After a wonderful two weeks, during which I was known to other members of the cast as Bridgit O'Gabor, the play closed.

Two months passed. The phone rang. It was Mel again, all excited and full of news. He had money. His ten Irishmen were ready to take *Strike a Match* on the road. He had talked every one of them into breaking commitments. (Mel knew more about the Blarney stone than any Irishman alive.) How about Bridgit O'Gabor?

I was then up to my neck in a marathon television show in Cincinnati, but I wanted more than anything in the world to go on the road with the show. And so I did.

That tour was patched together out of broken commitments.

Being the only woman in a cast of ten healthy males has its drawbacks. You become the Little Mother of Them All whether you like it or not. Men have a sneaky way of playing on that maternal instinct for all it's worth although they will deny it immediately. Yet I was always the one who had to worry about getting them to the train on time or seeing to it that their luggage was packed or their suits pressed or their laundry sent out early enough to be returned before we moved on. I was combination actress, social secretary, maid, and valet. I got quite a kick out of it, though I wouldn't want them to know this.

This tour gave me my first real glimpse of America, an America which to me had been New York and

Hollywood with the peasantry wedged in between. I visited cities up and down the East Coast, slept in hotels, boardinghouses, gambling casinos, and now and then in private homes as a guest. One night the cast might have a few tiny rooms in an inadequate hotel. The next night we might have the luxury of an entire floor.

The traveling in trains and buses, the one-night stands, the general bustle, were all glorious. I learned that fundamentally audiences are the same throughout the country. The standards are high. Very few down-right bad plays ever reach the road, and the out-of-towners are used to good drama and good acting. They can't be sold short. A Palm Beach audience is a New York audience gone south for the winter.

If any genuine difference in audiences can be found I think it can be found in Texas. Texas is the only mythical country left in the world. Texas audiences like big brassy musical comedies. They think a straight drama is something that someone forgot to put to music. They will never forgive Shakespeare for tampering with Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate*.

The road is hard work. Whenever you have leisure you sleep it away. I would travel by train at night. In the morning, when I arrived in a town, I would find a few reporters and we would blink at each other in our pre-breakfast fog. Then would follow an interview, often on the train itself, during which I would parry the usual questions about men, marriage, and glamour, and try to say something about the play. Next I would

check in at the hotel, then rush off for a radio interview. These interviews are important publicity for the success of a show on the road. Following the radio show would come lunch and then, if possible, a nap. My afternoons were generally given over to television interviews or fashion shows. Wherever I went the local department store seemed to have a fashion show waiting for me. My job was to put in an appearance, pose for fashion shots, and give interviews in which fashion was definitely not spinach.

Once in San Francisco I was conned into posing for publicity shots on a merry-go-round atop a local department store. It was Christmastime and the floor was filled with toy animals. I was to pose with an animal. The beastie they selected for me was stuffed only in the sense that we are all stuffed—with intestines, blood, heart, and other equipment, all in fine working order. It was a tiger cub, as live as they come.

I sat sidesaddle on a merry-go-round horse while a gentleman came up and deposited the striped brute in my lap. He seemed distinctly relieved to get rid of him.

In publicity shots tiger cubs are darling little things. Hold one in your lap someday and you'll get a different view. To begin with, the cub is as big as a good-sized dog, and once the thing gets near you, your blood chills. There's the raw gamy smell of the jungle about this animal. It's not Fido. He won't fetch your pipe and slippers. You can't find one molecule of love or undying affection in the yellow eyes that stare at you. He is staring for a reason. He is wondering which part

to eat first and whether you'll be stringy and tough. He makes you feel like a loin of pork.

I suppose the cub had plenty of whole blood and raw meat for breakfast because he was not quite up to another meal. He settled down on my lap, yawning now and then so that I could watch his cute baby teeth, each an inch and a half long and curved like an upholsterer's needle.

I sat there with that darn cub in my lap, frozen with fear. Every time the cub stretched he got a good purchase on my leg with his businesslike claws, and had I been less petrified I would have jumped through the ceiling.

Next time the store wants a picture with a tiger cub, let the buyer hold him. And let the buyer beware.

After my television or fashion show commitments in the afternoon I used to return to my hotel room, climb into bed with a detective story, and order dinner from room service. At night I went to the theater an hour before curtain time, especially if it was a new town. I wanted to familiarize myself with the stage and the size of the house. To play to 1500 seats is a different matter from playing to 3500. After a look at the stage and the house I would dress at leisure, relaxing and divorcing myself from the rest of the day. Then members of the cast would visit each other to chat a bit before curtain time.

If it was a one-night stand the final curtain meant a return to the dressing room to pack clothes and costumes, then a rush to catch the night train to the next

port of call. Then sandwiches and milk on the train with the rest of the cast, an hour's gab, and so to bed.

The real trick in being on the road is to be with Pat O'Brien. He knows five or six people in every town in America, and he knows them well, too. There's so much hospitality showered on Pat O'Brien that anyone can live well off the leftovers.

I remained the only woman in or near *Strike a Match* until the show hit New Orleans, where Eloise O'Brien, Pat's wife, joined us. It was great to have her. I was in desperate need of some feminine company by this time. She and I used to shop for antiques in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

Pat and Eloise celebrated their twenty-second wedding anniversary there. Since they are a devout couple the cast bought them a beautiful fifteenth-century crucifix as a gift. The presentation was my excuse to break down and I had one hell of a good cry. Partly because of that week and partly because of the city itself, I have never lost my love for New Orleans.

Strike a Match reached its grand finale in Memphis, where we played our last performance to a capacity audience of 3500. After the final curtain all the Irishmen picked me up bodily (how else can anyone be picked up?) and sang me a serenade. This was the signal for me to bawl again. I ran to Eloise O'Brien to dampen her blouse, sobbing, "They're so sweet! They just sang 'Old Anxiety' for me." I thought that "Old Anxiety" was the title of "Auld Lang Syne," and I couldn't understand why they laughed through my

tears. It's not nice for people to laugh through other people's tears.

To me any play that I'm in is the greatest play in the world. I thought that *Strike a Match* was the greatest play in the world. It was written in movie technique with flashbacks and other devices difficult on the stage. Only when it lay down and died within sight of Broadway was I able to take an objective look at the remains, say good-by to my ten Irishmen, and write off *Strike a Match* as great fun if not deathless theater.

I'm Just a Girl Who Likes To. So?

I RETURN like the homing pigeon to my favorite subject: the public picture of myself with which I must live. There are some things spotlighted blonde women dare not say. Every movie magazine, for instance, will write of a prominent Hollywood actress that she yearns only for a home and a brood of little ones. This hoopla usually generates considerable cynicism among readers. Often the cynicism is justified, but things have reached such a point that no prominent actress can express a desire for home and children with a straight face.

I for one would like a home and children but I am afraid to say so because I can already hear the horse laughs. My desire happens to be genuine. I won't bother pressing the point because I know when I'm licked.

On other matters I am even less inclined to fight. I won't go in for the "just a plain homebody" routine

because it isn't true. I like many things more than I like puttering around the kitchen to toss off a little soufflé that collapses with a bang when the phone rings. Most of the actresses who like to putter around the kitchen really putter around the cook who putters around the kitchen. And most of the cooks would like the actresses to putter around elsewhere.

Nobody who is at all involved in a theatrical career can be more than a homebody third class. Life in the entertainment industries isn't organized that way. As I write this I have a midnight to 2 A.M. radio show, and I begin my night's sleep about 3:30 A.M. Naturally I am not up with the larks. The larks aren't disc jockeys. Let them get up when they want; I'll get up when I want. "Who wakes early finds gold," says an old Hungarian proverb, but did you ever see a rich lark?

Though not a homebody, I have always wanted a home, so much so that I actually bought one.

My motive in buying a house and fixing it up for myself was fear. "Security" is the word people usually use. I worry about what will happen to me in my old age. Worrying comes natural to me. It helps me pass the time. I know that it's one thing to be broke when you're young and pretty, but quite another thing when you're old and—well, just old. Great reflections of this nature led me to kick my head in a big tree. To "kick your head in a big tree" is another Hungarian proverb which takes a little more than translation to give it meaning. It is used whenever someone bites off more than he can chew.

I always thought it would be wonderful to own a small building and live rent-free in one of the apartments. This idea has also occurred to a number of landlords. As I first conceived my plan I would find such a building, buy it, fix it up, then sit back to let the tenants pay my rent and grocery bills, take care of all expenses and mortgages, and cheer me up whenever I grew gloomy. I have since discovered that this estimate of the situation is not correct.

I began to look for such a building. I searched on and off for two years and finally found exactly what I wanted: a small building on upper Fifth Avenue facing Central Park. I was so excited that I immediately called Mama to tell her I had located my castle. It had only one drawback. It was a one-family castle. I wanted a castle with apartments where the serfs could live and pay my rent for me. I couldn't see any possibility of converting the building.

Mama dashed over to look at the building and deliver final judgment. She told me I am not her smartest daughter, since it was evident to anyone with eyes that ten apartments could be made in the building. Mama told me to buy it first and worry about the remodeling afterward.

I bought it. The purchase price took every cent of my liquid capital (the only kind I ever had) and some of the bank's money. There I was, the owner of a fine five-story stone building on Fifth Avenue, a building for which I was suddenly and almost unaccountably responsible. What had I gone and done? I didn't have

the vaguest idea what my next step should be. I had never heard the title "building contractor." I had a notion that I was supposed to collect a flock of carpenters, plumbers, masons, and electricians, give them instructions, and turn them loose inside the building. In desperation I went to my lawyer. This happened to be the smart thing to do although I didn't know it at the time. The lawyer couldn't solve my problems himself, but at least he sent me to the right people.

Today I will stake my minks that I know as much about mortgages, taxes, building construction, and plumbing as any young woman in the entertainment industry and most women out of it. I mothered that building for a year and a half. Whenever I had a spare moment I rushed to the bank for more money, begged for mortgages and got them (the getting always surprised me), sat in on planning meetings, and suffered while the experts treated me like the town idiot.

In the beginning everyone yawned or read the newspapers when I offered my ideas to the contractor. The experts decided that I was a glamour girl who knew nothing about real estate, but I don't think even they realized how right they were. But if the British survive entire historical epochs by the technique of muddling through, I could muddle through one little old building.

Today I can name every corner of that building after a role in the theater, stock, or television. Each time things came to a halt because there was no cash to pay the piper (the piper being the plumber), I would get a

job that carried me past the crisis. I was now a corporation, the Mignonette Corporation after my role in *The Happy Time*, and I felt like a fat cigar.

The doctor's office on the street level was the final step in the remodeling of the building. Just as the contractor was about to start on the waiting room I found that I was five thousand dollars away from the finish line. The contractor was no philanthropist. He went home to read the newspaper and soak his feet. By the sheerest luck I landed another contract that very week. It covered the cost of setting up the sawbones. There it was—the Gabor Building, with my very own apartment, and with eager apple-cheeked tenants ready to support me for the rest of my life.

While fear of the future led me to buy the building, owning it helped me conquer another fear, the fear of being alone. This fear had been with me for years. I could not sleep in a house or an apartment unless I knew someone was in the next room. When I was left alone a fanciful and ridiculous imagination started to kick me around. Since living in my building I have slowly conquered this fear, not via the couch, but simply by telling myself that it was very silly and I must stop the nonsense. Now I have reached the point where I welcome periods of solitude and the knowledge that I am alone to do as I wish.

I feel about this building just as I felt about the first seventy-five-dollar check Paramount gave me. The mere fact of owning the building is not the source of

my satisfaction. It will be a long time before I really own it, and the bank and I are, willy-nilly, partners in this great adventure. But for the first time, after years of hotels, small "efficiency" apartments so called because of their inefficiency, overnight hospitality, and upper berths, here I was with a home of my own! The bank doesn't feel quite as sentimental about the matter.

Before the remodeling began, the building contained a tiny elevator used when one family lived there. This elevator was the first casualty when reconstruction began, and in a short time I was scampering up and down ladders to survey my estate. It was my little jungle gym. The workmen treated me with a new respect when they saw I was not afraid to scramble about in the mess. After the elevator was out and before the stairway was in I rented the first apartment on the fifth floor. The prospective tenants climbed the straight ladders, following my lead, inspected the lumber and lathing which lay around the alleged rooms, and rented the apartment then and there.

While all this was going on I kept beating a path to the bank, where I visited with such frequency that the manager almost put me on salary.

Once my accent got me into trouble. I had a long talk with the contractor concerning changes I wanted made on one floor. He assured me that he understood perfectly and I had nothing to worry about. When I returned two days later I discovered that he had torn

out an entire wall, the most necessary sort of wall, the kind of wall that makes a room a room. When I found the contractor and demanded an explanation, he insisted that I had instructed him to take out the wall. I was on the point of cutting out my tongue and throwing it away as a vestigial gadget of no earthly use.

That little misunderstanding cost me a thousand dollars.

As head of my own purchasing department, I gave myself many headaches. I can go out and buy fixtures for my own bathroom with little enough trouble, but I suddenly found myself having to buy ten bathrooms complete as well as passing judgment on the plumbing fixtures, the sinks, and the johns. Anyone who hasn't bought ten johns at once just hasn't lived. It gives you a sort of Grand Central feeling. I bought them all, and every tenant ended up with a nice bathroom except me. Mine ended up pink when I wanted white.

Then I had to buy fixtures for ten kitchens. My judgment of stoves is limited by the demands of scrambled eggs, but I bought the ten kitchens too—stoves, sinks, refrigerators, and all. I discovered that your own personal taste is a dangerous standard. You have to determine a neutral taste, an acceptable level, which will please any tenant. Somehow or other I got by.

During this period a girl from Smith College worked with me as my secretary, building inspector, sanitation department, and bit player in television. She and I had

a theory that we would be good for each other's nerves. The theory was splendid but we were both too nervous to pay any attention to it.

Finally the building was finished, the apartments rented, and I was installed like the plumbing. Now I was ready for my elaborate debut as a homebody. In furnishing the apartment I discovered that the antiquarian surroundings in my old Budapest home had seeped through to me without my knowing it. I began to collect Louis XV furnishings with the eagerness of a pointer flushing pheasants. Soon I had furnished the entire apartment in Louis XV style. Now I live among statuary and antiques again!

I am a very particular housekeeper in the sense that everything must be just so or my back itches. I cannot sleep if a picture is hanging on the bias, or if all the closet doors aren't closed just so, or if the glasses on the end table in the hall are not in line like a platoon. What an unpleasant way to be! While I don't go in for regular housekeeping, I am equally finicky about the appearance of the table at dinner. The food can be hamburger (and it usually is) but it must be served with the flourish of a Salome offering St. John's head on the Limoges.

As a cook I can manage. I enjoy the little I do, probably because it is little. Eating to me will always be one step higher in human activity than cooking. I have my two cooking specialties, both of which are practically foolproof. Specialty number one is hamburger. Here is my secret recipe:

HAMBURGER, GABOR

Ingredients

- 1 pound of hamburger
- 1 frying pan

Directions

Divide hamburger into patties. Place patties in frying pan. Turn on gas. Turn patties over. Eat.

My hamburgery is as good as anyone's.

Specialty number two is Eggs Eva, as it was dubbed by *Look* magazine, which actually printed this recipe along with recipes contributed by other personalities.

Since gourmets the world over are waiting breathlessly, the wine properly chilled, here is the blueprint:

EGGS EVA

Ingredients

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| 4 eggs | ½ cup cream |
| Sausages | Salt |
| Green pepper, chopped | |

Directions

Fry sausages and put aside. Drain off fat. To 4 slightly beaten eggs add ½ cup of cream, salt, and chopped green pepper. Melt butter in pan, add eggs, and scramble lightly. Fold in sausage and chopped green pepper, and serve.

All you can taste is the pepper, but if you can taste the pepper why taste anything else?

I was positively awe-stricken by some of the recipes contained in the little folder that first made public the secret of Eggs Eva. Consider the comedienne Paula Lawrence, who contributed an item called Paella Valencia. This included such esoteric items as globe artichokes and saffron, and the cooking instructions

are such that no one without an engineering degree can carry them out. Yet I myself have moments of great daring in the kitchen, moments of rare triumph and magnificent defeat.

Late one night, when I was hungry and surrounded by guests in a similar condition, I decided to end my life as a conservative in the kitchen. I was going to live dangerously and cook up a little something that my guests would talk about to the end of their days. Somewhere I had read that it is possible to give a steak a charcoal-broiled effect by covering it with brown sugar. From the refrigerator where it nestled happily among the beer cans I drew a magnificent sirloin, red and luscious, begging to be broiled. Tenderly I coated both sides with a thick layer of brown sugar, then slid it gently under the broiler, where it cackled like a live hen. When it was done I placed it on a carving board, brought it to the table, and carved it with the appropriate gestures. I opined that had Escoffier lived to eat this steak he would have cut his throat.

Before I took my first bite I waited to observe the electric effects of my cookery on the guests. The first woman to bite into the steak was a woman of great refinement and self-control. She proved this by swallowing. Then she turned pale and gasped, "My God, Eval! The damn thing's sweet!"

I bit it. Indeed, it was the sweetest, most sugary steak ever served on this planet. And disgusting, too.

I sent down for hot dogs, corned beef sandwiches, and beans. I cooked the beans and the hot dogs success-

fully. Every time I cook I end up by sending down for delicatessen.

Some weeks later I learned that what I had read about the brown-sugar steak was correct—under certain conditions. The oven must be extremely hot, so hot that the sugar immediately carbonizes. Then the heat must be brought down. But I hadn't bothered with these little niceties.

My prediction that the guests would talk about that steak for the rest of their lives was correct. But I was wrong in thinking Escoffier would have cut his throat had he eaten it. He would have cut mine.

But what's the use of kidding? If there are any virtues I will not attain, the kitchen is the place where I will not attain them. My only genuine domestic virtue is sewing. I sew for relaxation, and I usually shorten my own dresses (provided, of course that they're too long) .

So I'm not a homebody. Sue me.

How Balanced Was My Budget!

SHORTLY AFTER I bought my house I began to brood over all the money I had sunk into it. I had put my life in hock and now I had to redeem it. Under the guise of providing for tomorrow I had been mighty reckless with today. This led me to a great decision: the decision to economize by becoming a serious and frugal housekeeper. Enough of this gay flinging about of mortgages!

As any housekeeper knows, the first step in a home economics program is to shop in a supermarket. You can buy mechanical toenail polishers, light your cigarettes with bearer bonds, and throw your overcoats away after one wearing, but if you shop in a supermarket, you're thrifty! Conversely, not to shop in the supermarket is the sign of a loose woman, a degrader of home and fireside who doesn't deserve her apple-checked and endearing husband.

I have known women who refuse to buy any but im-

ported vintage wines, and yet stand on the supermarket line for two hours to save fifteen cents. During this time they wear out thirty-three cents worth of shoe leather, four dollars worth of patience, and the reserves of good will on which their husbands were permitted to draw in times of crisis. And when they finally fight their way out they are so exhausted that they must stop for a seventy-five-cent cocktail to give them strength to make the journey home.

But this knowledge did not deter me. I passed a supermarket, and since I needed a quart of milk I decided to start my economy program at once. Save a penny here, a penny there, and before you know it you've got a nickell!

I picked up my quart of milk and then found myself in a long line of serious shoppers, each one of whom was obviously provisioning a two-year expedition to the Antarctic. On all sides of me, and especially in front, were shopping carts piled to the ceiling with thousands of goodies.

That sight was enough for me. I dropped my quart of milk and ran like a bunny for the nearest exit. When I was on the street again I felt very self-righteous indeed. I had been in a supermarket, and I had almost economized! This proved my strength of character and will power.

What if I had stayed and sweated out that line to save the penny on my quart of milk? I would have become insufferable. I would have looked up all my extravagant friends for the sole purpose of lecturing

them. I can hear me now, saying, "Ah, you have no self-control, that's the trouble with you. Why, do you realize that I go to the supermarket to save a penny on a quart of milk?" And then they would look at me with profound respect and wonder, amazed that someone like myself, with a reputation for flightiness, should be so very careful and sensible with her money.

That's what I like to think. Actually, had I stayed in the supermarket I would have put back the milk and found a few items such as truffles, smoked oysters, and imported *pâté de foie gras*, and I probably would have bought twenty pounds of porterhouse when I discovered it was two cents cheaper per pound.

I have economy fits that come over me like recurrent malaria. I may be walking along the street when suddenly thoughts of the house and the investment disturb me and I resolve to be a budget-balancer. I'm smart about some things. When it comes to getting money for services rendered, I know what I'm doing and I never sell myself short. But when it comes to shelling it out, it's a different story. My trouble is that I'm the victim of one of the most popular and dangerous of all theories. That theory is called, "It will save you money in the long run."

If I had all the money I have spent saving money in the long run, I could retire this minute. I can show you in black and white that a Cadillac is cheaper than a Ford. Then I can prove that it's cheaper to get a new Cadillac every year than to keep the old one for three years. I can show you why a vacation in Paris is cheaper

in the long run than a vacation in Brooklyn. I can show you how a standing rib roast is more economical than hamburger. (You stretch it, you know, by making soup with the ribs, grinding bits of it, and incidentally adding mushrooms, shallots, rare herbs and spices, and wine. But I never get that far because when bedtime comes I raid the refrigerator and eat the part that was supposed to stretch for the next three days.)

And so I go, bankrupting myself by saving money in the long run. And what a long run it is!

I've thought of other ways of balancing my budget and using my head in financial affairs. I have a friend named Paul (I use a phony name to avoid a libel suit) who is known as an "eccentric," a kindly way of stating that he is sometimes an awful pill. Paul is just about as rich as a man can get. If he never kept track of money as long as he lived, he could still be buried in ermine. But Paul has peculiar habits. When he invites other men out to lunch, Paul reaches for the check, divides by the number of guests present, and then collects. He even makes everyone chip in for the tip. I know one fellow whom Paul offered to drive to Westport with him. This lad came back and said to me, "Do you know, Eva, Paul stopped for gas and he expected me to pay for half of it." Then he shook his head sadly and said, "I suppose that's how he got so rich."

This made a deep, if temporary, impression on me. I decided to be a nasty skinflint. I would begin by splitting checks with my friends when I invited them out, and retaining a cost accountant to figure out the tab

per guest at my dinner parties. Then I, too, could become really rich like Paul.

This determination lasted almost one whole day, and it was very unpleasant. Then I sat down and figured out how much Paul saved by splitting gas and lunch bills, and sticking to a strict ten per cent on the tips. It came to something like \$4321 over a period of fifty years. I could come to only one conclusion. Paul's stinginess had nothing whatsoever to do with his accumulated wealth, which is counted in the millions.

Once I almost yielded to pressure and bought stocks, but I couldn't go through with it. I just can't believe they're real. You can't eat them. You can't wear them on your head. You can't take a ride in them. They're only pieces of paper, and I understand that you don't even get the actual pieces of paper.

Grandpapa was very levelheaded about questions of economy and budget-balancing. He was a great believer in hereditary wealth, partly because that's where his came from. Being a kindly man, he had a social program to go with his beliefs. "Eva," he used to say to me, "everybody should inherit wealth. It's such a sensible practice that I'm surprised more people don't do it."

Although Grandpapa tried for many years to devise a practical method to make everyone hereditarily wealthy, he never succeeded. The idea is a good one, however, and it's about time our politicians gave it some consideration.

My economy drives usually start early in the morn-

ing and end at lunchtime. They are the result of the unconscious influence of an aunt of mine. She lived near us in Budapest and whenever we visited her she gave us long lessons, with examples drawn from life, on the importance of frugality. She was a saver, perhaps the greatest saver in world history. She had a simply magnificent collection of bits of string, wrapping paper, cigar boxes, rubber bands, buttons, rusty screws, broken crockery, and anything else that might have some conceivable value here or in the Great Beyond. When she emptied an ice tray for one cube, she would try to save the others in a bowl, and when they melted she thought it was horribly extravagant of nature. She could never really believe that ice was only frozen water. She even hated to throw out the garbage.

Our big conflict with Aunty developed over her radio set. She had an old radio, the closest thing in the field to an antique. In the early days of radio, I understand, such sets had grand names like "superheterodyne." She had an extra-super-ultra-heterodyne with all sorts of knobs on the outside and coils on the inside. The knobs had a fancy nomenclature among which I recall the term "rheostat." The inside coils had a peculiar penchant for uncoiling during the night so that in the morning she was often greeted by miles of unsprung wire luxuriant as the trailing arbutus.

Whenever that happened Aunty would call the repair man. Since each radio repair on her extra-super-ultra-heterodyne cost almost as much as a new and efficient portable radio, we tried to convince her that

her economy was rather misplaced. Grandpapa even offered to buy her a set. She considered our advice scandalous and in direct defiance of the Ten Commandments, although she would never say which one.

On went the extra-super-ultra-heterodyne, and on went Aunty, calling the repair man at regular intervals. In retrospect I am convinced that he procured some of the spare parts he needed from the Smithsonian Institution.

Then our attitude changed. We stopped berating Aunty for her economy. The radio repair man appeared to be interested. Maybe, just maybe, he might marry her.

This never came to pass. He liked her well enough but he must have known that if he married Aunty he would lose his best customer. And if he lost his best customer, how could he ever hope to support Aunty? She died a virgin, and we buried her with her favorite rheostat clutched in her hand.

It was from Aunty that I learned, in a backhanded way, how to economize.

But I have nothing to worry about. It's much cheaper to be extravagant—in the long run.

Mr. Shubert's Back Pocket

WHEN I BEGAN this book I took out literary insurance by saying that I am not a great intellect. I've waited patiently for outraged denials but there haven't been any. The confession came easily enough because I haven't any ambitions in purely intellectual directions. As soon as people get very smart they realize they're crazy and they give their bankbooks to the analyst and wear hair shirts.

All I want is theater. I live and dream of the theater when I'm in it and when I'm not in it. This confuses me because I don't know why this is so or what is the source of the great pleasure the theater gives me. It may be ego satisfaction. It may be my means of escaping reality or some horrid type of infantilism. You can get these explanations by the number like a Western Union birthday greeting. They all have one thing in common: they don't explain much.

My qualifications for discussing the theater are clear.

I am stage-struck. I don't have much experience. I've got a raging ambition that is horrible to behold. And I've got a lot of nerve. I know critics, both professional and amateur, who get along on a lot less.

The greatest satisfactions in my life have come from the theater. Yet how few and far between are these satisfactions for the average actor or actress. You go to a New York theater and read the section of the program called "Who's Who in the Cast." There you see each actor's history recorded, his entire theatrical career from his birth in the wings of a vaudeville theater to the current play. What a succession of stirring triumphs! What a lot of malarky! You won't read what happened to him between plays. The six months spent selling razor blades and sundries. The time he became a licensed life insurance agent and sold policies to three of his best friends. The years of hanging around casting offices. The long dry stretches "at liberty."

Even when actors work they know that a few months "at liberty" will leave them high and dry again. What makes them so tenacious? Why should a man struggle for years to establish himself as a fine actor only to be cavalierly released from a role because he's "not the type"?

Actors survive, and their survival is the only flaw in the theory of evolution.

Well, every man to his own poison!

While the actors suffer, people who should be cutting lamb chops are cutting Ibsen, and other people

are making bad musicals out of good plays, or even unsexing classic operas to make them fit the current Broadway formulae. But why am I complaining? I even enjoy plays I don't particularly like. Last season I saw everything on the boards, and I liked everything I saw. Brooks Atkinson needn't worry. I'm no threat to his job.

What really surprises me today is that actors and directors make so many plays. The technical perfection of a Broadway theater is a seven-day wonder. Time and again a mediocre script turns out to be exciting theater because the acting and direction have lifted it so far above its natural level.

One word I'm sick of hearing is the word "entertainment." Some solemn owl is always willing to pontificate on this subject, assuring us that "the people want entertainment," "the first thing is entertainment," and many more variations of a sentiment that was not too profound to begin with. Behind this slogan march some of the biggest theatrical junkmen now at large. Those who bless us with these slogans never tell us what they mean by "entertainment." Dig a little and you discover it is their way of demanding plays based completely and single-mindedly on the boy-meets-girl-boy-loses-girl-boy-gets-girl formula, with nothing that could vaguely be interpreted as an idea allowed to intrude. Above all, they insist that a play must not have a "message."

Message. Horrid word. But what an absurdity. There is no such thing as a play without a message or a point

of view. When such plays do come along they are insufferably dull. Who wants to hear from a playwright without a point of view? You certainly wouldn't want to spend a social evening with such a man, unless you were in one of his plays.

Shakespeare's message in *Othello* is that jealousy is self-consuming. The message of the musical comedy *Pal Joey* is that a heel pays for being a heel by remaining fundamentally alone and unloved. When people say they don't like plays with messages that's not what they mean at all. They mean that they disagree with the point of view of some messages, which is a very different thing.

I think, too, that the theater suffers somewhat because playwrights cut themselves up, send part to Hollywood for gold, part to radio, part to television. There are too many diversions from single-minded devotion to the stage. Yet if actors have a rough time of it I'm sure the same is true of playwrights. Who can begrudge them their prejudice in favor of eating, and their inclination to indulge this prejudice?

When I first moved among theater people I discovered that the affectionate language of the theater, its "darlings" and "daddies" and "sweethearts," has a counterpart in expressions so violent you would think that all these loving people hate everybody. A director will say, with more expression than an actor would ever use, "Look, in this scene the audience has to die." This means that the audience has to like the scene. Or you can say of a particularly amusing idea, "This will

murder them!" Sometimes you don't demand death. You settle for maiming. For instance you may appeal to the composer and lyric writer in a musical by reminding them that they have to turn out a song that will "fracture" the audience. A "fractured" audience is an audience which is enjoying itself immensely. If you asked how a show went you might hear in reply, "The audience flipped! They died in their seats! I tell you, they were picking up their heads." Sometimes it scares me.

So come to the theater, flip, die, and get fractured. Besides, it's air-conditioned.

The superstition along Broadway is also something to behold. If someone—lyric writer, choreographer, what have you—does an outstanding job he is suddenly marked "hot." That means he can't fail. When a fellow's hot—well, he's hot, and that's all there is to it. It even happens that a "hot" guy is associated with a flop, but tales of his heat have spread so far that he remains in demand.

In television I was always half amused, half annoyed, at a species of publicity and criticism that uses the bust as a yardstick of an actress's talent. Women have been reviewed with a tape measure. The innocuous word "sweater" has taken on a new physiological meaning, so that a "sweater girl" is not just a girl who wears a sweater but one who stretches it. I ascribe this to the growing pains of some men, and let it go at that, yet I never get over being a little shocked at seeing this type of publicity used in the theater. After all, theater

is theater. Ads have urged me to see a play because in it an actress who never before wiggled her hips now wiggles her hips. I have been urged to see a play because it is sexy, or shocking, or full of girls. I should go to look at girls! Who's crazy?

The cost of the theater also amazes me, from both the producing and the audience end. Today I am told that a modest play, sans music, with one set and a small cast, eats up \$60,000 before the curtain rises. A show budget of \$300,000 is not a rarity by any means. I think, too, that the cost of tickets limits the theater to too small a group of people. If a fellow takes his girl to a show and then out for a bite he has to figure the night will cost him a conservative fifteen dollars, or a radical twenty. That's all right for the wooing, but after the honeymoon it's strictly for anniversaries.

No one has yet explained to me why all of New York's theaters should be crowded into one small area, an area that I understand is the most expensive in the world in terms of real estate values. I guess it's so people can't park their cars easily. If they could park easily they would get soft and flabby and lose their moral fiber.

People talk of the stock market as a big gamble. But Wall Street is only ducking for apples compared with the Broadway stage. A group of people, actors and angels and directors, throw their all into a production: their money, their grandparents, their hopes, their best shirts. They work like maniacs for months, go on the road, cut, rewrite, come back to New York, and die in

two nights. Or perhaps they have a big hit. Suddenly they own the world. A subtle change comes over their digestive systems and if they eat any place but Sardi's the food turns to gall in their mouths.

And what of the actor? If his show folds after a few performances he is depressed. He has a license to be depressed, so no one can complain. But if the show is a hit he is in seventh heaven until the eighth month, when he begins to wonder if his entire career is going to consist of playing this one role. He renews his license and gets depressed all over again.

I have found it sad to contemplate that the sixty theaters which I found here when I came to America have now dwindled to about thirty. Theaters are dying—but the theater isn't. New York's City Center proves this every year by putting on classics or modern revivals with distinguished casts who work at Equity minimums. You have to get your seats for these City Center productions well in advance, and many of the shows are such instantaneous hits that they move right on to a Broadway house. The City Center used to be a Masonic temple and between productions the management carries on a ghostly trade in the sale of fezzes to disembodied Shriners.

I think it would be wonderful if the City Center could play the role that the National Theater played in Hungary, operating on a generous budget, developing repertory, and encouraging new plays. Such a theater would be in a position to ignore the purely commercial aspects of the stage. It would have an im-

pact on the entire American theater. A country this size should, by rights, have three or four national theaters.

All this, of course, should be done with me in the job of casting director so that I could cast myself upon these waters. Someday I would even like to play Shaw. Shaw gives you something else that is usually so conspicuously absent from the theater today: language, good full rich language that fills your mouth with juicy satisfying lines. Realism is something more than the repetition of monosyllables.

I wonder if there's a Shavian character who could be billed as a Hungarian? How about Lina in *Misalliance*? Lina is Polish but who would know the difference in accents except me? By the way, have you noticed how careful Shaw was to give this play an English title only to have a lot of hoity-toity theatergoers give it a French pronunciation? I'll bet they think Donizetti was a Frenchman who wrote *Lucia de la M'Amour*.

Maybe we could rewrite *Pygmalion*. Any good TV adapter could do the job. You see, this here now speech expert meets this here Cockney girl who is selling flowers. But this here Cockney girl is a Hungarian Cockney who speaks Magyockncy—a combination of Magyar and Cockney. The speech fellow makes a bet he can teach her to talk like a lady . . .

Could be done. Or couldn't it?

Three Loves Had I

MEN PLAY a much larger part in the public loves of glamour girls than in their private lives. I have been both hunter and hunted, and what depresses me is that in either role I'm usually the one who gets hurt.

My life often has an offbeat rhythm. The strangest manner of men are always putting in an appearance, usually, praise be, via the U.S. mails or the telephone, both great protectors. Some of my experiences are disturbing, some interesting, some frightening.

It is frightening, for instance, to conduct a disc jockey show on the air and receive phone calls from men who are evidently unbalanced and irresponsible. It is interesting to receive mail from men thousands of miles away who have no ulterior motive in writing other than the pleasure they find in sending a chatty note to a "celebrity." It is disturbing to receive proposals in the mail from men who are lonely and whose concepts of love and marriage as something you can

find in a Sears Roebuck catalogue inspire them to write these mildly insane notes in full expectation of being taken seriously.

Once I received a wild note from a man who promised faithfully to hang himself if I didn't take pity upon him and marry him at once. It was only when I discovered that two other actresses whom I know received the same note from the same man that I calmed down. "Hanging Charlie," as we call him, has been at it for a long time and he is still un-hanged.

I answer all my mail except when anything I might say could possibly be interpreted as encouragement. This is a fairly good rule, which has only backfired once, when I took the lenient view in a borderline case.

From California came a ruddy letter, its tone a shade too familiar, mentioning that the writer (let's call him Ted) had seen my picture in a magazine and had also seen me in television. Ted was a selfless fellow who wanted only to tell me that he enjoyed my existence, and why didn't I give myself a chance to enjoy his? I warmed up this chilly old planet for him.

The note was nonsense, but harmless nonsense, and so I wrote a brief reply, thanking him for his kind words. Then I forgot all about him.

But Ted's glands were not so easily soothed. In a week's time I received another note, heavy with the scent of men's talcum, this time from San Diego. I didn't connect it with the Los Angeles letter at first.

That idea came to me at night, and when I compared the two notes in the morning I realized that they poured from the same eager pen.

Then the ring began to tighten. Ted's letters kept pouring from his full heart although I never answered any but the first. This did not discourage him one little bit. Ted, whoever he was, had one of those new self-sealing egos that are punctureproof.

Most men who write this rather pathetic type of letter tell the most outrageous lies about themselves. They let me know that they are Oklahoma oil tycoons, great playwrights, South American ranchers, space cadets, or Louis B. Mayers. One was a research chemist who had renounced the fleshpots of the world to devote himself to the development of pasteurized lanolin. But Ted wasn't of this mold. Ted cheerfully informed me that he was something of a bum who lived on his wits and other people's money. He tempered this confession with the great news that he was also the most attractive and irresistible thing that ever walked, and I was going to find out for myself, by God! And I had better get a good grip on myself because Ted was on his way, coming right down the Glory Road! My duty was clear. I had to send the welcome carpet to the cleaner, buy the best scotch and champagne, and fill the refrigerator with curried shrimp because Ted was simply mad for curried shrimp. Yes, sir.

The first few weeks of this offside correspondence didn't bother me. I treated the letters like a joke even when they became more and more familiar in tone.

The Ted who began his Los Angeles epistle to the heathen with "My Dear Miss Gabor" soon worked up to "Dear Eva," shifted to "Eva Honey," and then burst out in "My best Little Baby."

Ted was an honest man, mind you. He let me know that I was not his one and only best little baby. I was to go into this thing with my eyes open so that I would be saved eventual disillusion and heartbreak. Facts are facts, and wherever Ted went the cops had to clear a path through the mass of howling women who begged for the touch of his hand or a souvenir such as an old button or the tip of his shoelace. Why, there were women west of the Mississippi whom Ted had snubbed, and that snub was the highlight of their lives, the thing that kept them going.

Ted's letters grew crazier and crazier, which was all right, but Ted himself drew closer and closer. When the letter came from Los Angeles it was faintly amusing. When it came from San Diego I was curious. When it came from Milwaukee I started to study the map. And when it came from Chicago I was scared.

This fellow was actually closing in on me, all on the basis of one note in which I had written, "Thank you for your kind words."

Soon I knew exactly how the fox feels when he hears the baying of the hound. Ted's letters took on the dramatic character of a suspense play. Every morning I would open the mail fearfully, wondering where was my wandering Ted tonight. Often many days passed without a letter from Ted, but this was even worse.

The letters, at least, advised me where he was. As long as I could be sure of his location I was not without hope. But when there was no letter my heart was in my mouth whenever I opened the hall closet.

Chicago. Then Detroit. And then, for some reason, back to Chicago and down to Springfield, Illinois. Then he turned up in Cleveland. I followed his progress by sticking red pins into the large military map I bought for the occasion.

One grim day—how well I remember it!—I walked downstairs for the mail at about eleven in the morning. Outside it snowed heavily and a bitter wind was blowing. Three werewolves were having a picnic in Central Park. The light in the house was gray—neither dark enough for electric lights nor light enough for visual comfort. The steam hadn't yet risen sufficiently in the pipes (my tenants will please ignore this misleading sentence), and before looking at my fistful of letters I put a few logs in the fireplace and started a friendly blaze. Then I sat down to purr in front of the fire with a cup of coffee at my elbow.

I shuffled through the letters. There it was! From Ted. And postmarked Newark, New Jersey!

I actually trembled. Then I started to talk some sense to myself. This was New York City, Fifth Avenue opposite the park. Around me was a protective layer of eight or nine million people, many of whom weighed over two hundred pounds. I was not alone. I could handle Ted.

But I wasn't quite sure.

Just before dinner that night the phone rang. I answered it.

"Eva?" the voice asked.

"Yes?" I said, puzzled, not recognizing the caller.

"Listen, baby, I can't get in till nine. I know waiting's going to be tough for you, but you'll have to do it. I'm in Jersey now, and I'd come in earlier but there's a little matter here I've got to handle first."

I gulped. "Ted?" I asked in my smallest voice.

Silence. Then he said, "Of course!" in shocked tones as though it were inconceivable to him that I shouldn't recognize his voice at once. Hadn't I been waiting by the telephone for this call for two months? And if not, why not?

Ted went right on. "I'll make it up to you, baby," he promised. "This'll be a real night. I'm going to let you write your own ticket. But I know you won't want to go out," he added.

By this time I had collected as much of myself as was within reach. "Ted," I asked, just to make triply sure, "are you the man who has been writing me those letters?"

"Naturally," he said.

"Now listen," I continued. "I don't want to see you tonight or any night. I don't want you to call me. I don't want you to write to me. And don't you dare ring my bell! If you do any of these things I promise you I'll call the cops!"

Then I hung up as hard as I could.

That night I had a number of friends visiting me,

including a couple who were staying as house guests, so I felt comfortable enough. Nothing happened. Nothing happened for the next day or the next week. Slowly I began to push Ted out of my mind until he faded away like the dissolve at the close of a movie.

I didn't hear from Ted for three months. Then the final letter arrived. It was postmarked Los Angeles.

Ted had sent me a thank-you note. He thanked me for the lovely evening I had afforded him when he visited New York. When I read the first few lines I thought it was sarcasm, but as I read on I became frightened all over again. It was not sarcasm. The letter had the unmistakable quality of sincerity. He had loved the dinner and the gown I wore, and he would not forget how sweet I was, and while he was obviously still obliged to fight off the besieging women, he assured me that I would always occupy a special place in his heart.

Enclosed in the letter was an exquisite Appenzell handkerchief.

With that, Ted and I parted company for all time.

The mail-order proposals that I receive now and then I take in my stride. When I received the very first of these I wondered if I should reply. But how do you reply to a proposal received by mail from a total stranger? Do you write, "Dear sir, I will not marry you"? Such letters can't be answered.

If I did not bear in mind the eccentricities of those writing such notes, they would be insulting. They

promise me huge sums of money, fabulous contracts, invaluable help in my career, but they never seem to give a damn whether or not we might like each other.

Of these mail-order proposals I remember most vividly two. One came from a foreign student who was studying in America. He was the son of a wealthy man, and he went into the most intricate details of life in his home country, including a critical examination of the mores as they concerned women. He assured me that I would have an honored place in his ménage; he would devote his life to my happiness, and I would find him both sensitive and considerate.

I remember this letter because it struck me as curiously genuine—and curiously naïve. Here he was criticizing his native land for its backward customs regarding women—and proposing to me by mail as though it were a perfectly reasonable thing to do. For some reason I credited him with sincerity and I was almost impelled to write him a note in return. Wisely, I managed to kill this impulse a-borning.

The second letter, the only one of its kind I have ever answered, I reprint here in slightly edited form. The writer, whose name I have elided, has since gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds, where I am sure he will make out better. He wrote:

Dear Miss Gabor:

I have seen you in television and read about you in magazines. I have thought of writing to you for many months. This morning I made up my mind to do it.

I want you to marry me. (Bingol—E.G.)

I know that I owe you an explanation for this odd let-

ter. I do not usually propose to people by mail. (Such restraint!)

I am a reputable man who has been in business for sixty-three years. Now I am retired. I live very comfortably with a car and three servants. I have cash and holdings to the amount of approximately \$370,000. Now I realize that none of this is reason for you to marry me, nor does it explain why I want to marry you.

First, from your point of view. I am now ninety-three years old and although I am relatively healthy for a man of my advanced years, my adventure in living is coming to a close. Very little of my wealth goes toward my own maintenance. My wants are the meager wants of an old man. I have no heirs. My will leaves part of my property to those who have worked for me. The rest I would leave to a woman who would share my last years as my wife. Since I am ninety-three you will conclude correctly that my demands upon you will be practically nil. (Until this point I wasn't sure. E.G.)

Perhaps you wonder what there is in this from my point of view. A foolish whim. Youth and beauty are pleasant sights to me, more so than ever. I would say that they are proper accompaniment to an old man living out his life. My friends and my family have all died. A man my age does not make new friends. If you were to say that I was buying a wife I would have to admit that it is true.

That is all, except that I think you would find life pleasant and free from worry here. It is good to put yourself beyond the reach of ambition. I know. I would not, however, interfere if you wished to pursue your own activities. If, in return, I have your presence from time to time and a modicum of companionship, I will consider myself fortunate.

I answered this letter briefly and in what I hope was a kindly fashion. A long time later, when my road show

played in a town about forty miles from the home of this writer, curiosity began to eat at me. I took a trip to his town just to look at his surroundings from a safe distance. I found the address. It was that of a beautiful home on a huge landscaped lawn through which ran a brook spanned by a little stone bridge almost hidden by moss. Clearly, his description of his assets had been accurate.

The house had a *For Sale* sign on it. I learned in town that the man had died some months before. I guess I was the only one who knew the poor old fellow had put up that *For Sale* sign before he died.

I had another wild and reckless romance with a quality very different from the others. This was a flesh-and-blood affair. The mails played no part.

We'll give the name of Peter to the young man in the case. Never mind the town or the other people involved. My romance with Peter was born in a middle-sized city after a successful performance of *Strike a Match*. I was in my dressing room preparing for a midnight snack and bed when someone knocked. The stage doorman said that a gentleman wanted to speak to me for a moment. I changed into my civvies and waited.

The man was in his early fifties, almost completely bald, rather fat. He did not have the lean and ravenous look of the stage-door johnny. He seemed a commonsensical sort, and he was careless about his clothes, which meant he had enough confidence in himself not

to leave his personality to his tailor. Then he introduced himself to me as a doctor and asked if I could spare him a little time.

Still not sure of my ground, I remarked that I had been hoping to have a snack and retire early. He immediately invited me to join him at the coffee shop in the local hotel where I had registered. This was a conservative family hostelry well paved with good intentions. I hesitated a moment, then agreed since the doctor seemed sincerely perturbed about something.

When we sat down at the table he asked me please not to think him foolish and to give some weight to the problem he would discuss with me. I asked the nature of the problem. Until that moment no man of fifty had ever come to me for advice although many had tried to dispense it.

"My son," he said. "My son is in love with you."

This was in the middle of my hamburger. I swallowed prematurely. "Do I know your son?" I asked.

He smiled. "I doubt it very much, Miss Gabor," he replied. "He's never been far from home. And besides"—and here the smile became a grin—"my son Peter is only thirteen years old."

Well, I laughed and relaxed, but he shook his head. "Miss Gabor," he continued, "I said this was a problem and I'm quite serious. You know youngsters. They get smitten in the most extravagant way, and Peter does better than most. He has an album filled with your pictures. He knows where you're touring, your whole itinerary. He knows every town you've been in

and every town you'll visit. Why, you're his Stan Musial." He grinned and I wondered who Stan Musial was. The doctor went on: "He writes letters and poetry to you which he never mails. I came across them by accident. He would die if he knew that I knew about them." He sighed. "I must confess, Miss Gabor, even if you think this is ungallant, at times Peter strikes me as something of an idiot. Of course, now that I've seen you I'm tempted to revise my opinion."

"That was a sweet remark," I said, giving the doctor an A-plus and one gold star. "I was thinking your boy is somewhat silly myself, but I didn't have the nerve to say so."

"Well, we're both a little cruel and a little forgetful," he went on. "The boy really isn't an idiot. He's sensitive, he's strong, and he's smart, but that doesn't keep him from a wild thirteen-year-old romance. He just does a better job at it than most."

Recalling my own extravagantly romantic moments, I agreed.

"Last night," continued the doctor, "my wife found him tiptoeing out of the house at eleven. She woke me and we stopped him. He invented some excuse and went back to bed. I know where he was going."

"Where?"

"To the theater. To see you."

"Oh!" I ate more hamburger.

"My wife asked me what was the matter with the boy. I told her he was in love with Eva Gabor."

"What did she say to that?" I asked.

"Say? She asked if Eva Gabor was a new child in the neighborhood. When I explained that this was the woman whose pictures filled his albums, she said, 'Oh, isn't that awful!'"

The doctor was pleasant company but I still wasn't sure what he wanted of me. I asked him.

"I want to spare him from being unnecessarily hurt," he explained, using one of the most famous sentences in the world. "You'll be here a week. The boy will find some way of seeing you. If you weren't prepared, you'd give him a quick smile and an autograph. He'd go home, pack up, and join the Foreign Legion." The doctor sighed and took another sip of coffee. "Now I want to ask you to help."

Again I asked how.

"Come to dinner tomorrow night," he suggested. "Meet the boy. Simply be nice to him. When he sees you're a real person and not just some sort of disembodied conception he has, I think it will do him good."

I couldn't refuse the doctor and I didn't try. Late the next afternoon I was as nervous as I had ever been for any performance. The doctor and his wife had arranged an early dinner so that I would have plenty of time to reach the theater. The doctor lived in a modest home with a small lawn and the usual appurtenances: garden hose, hammock, swing, a lawn mower in the garage, and an outboard motor in its canvas sheath. His wife answered my knock and took me to the living room, where she immediately in-

formed me that her grandfather on the maternal side had been a Hungarian from Budapest.

Then the doctor came downstairs and behind him, looking for all the world like an unripe Hamlet, was Peter, a tall, auburn-haired lad with light brown eyes and a terribly serious expression.

The doctor greeted me, then said to Peter, casually, "Peter, this is Eva Gabor."

I held out my hand. Peter took it. He stared at me as he shook my hand slowly, and then he blushed the most unrestrained blush I have ever seen. It came up like the sunrise and it refused to go away. For quality of color and staying power it was the world's greatest blush.

Believe me, I blushed too. It is easy enough to speak to a five-year-old or a seventeen-year-old, but between those ages lies a conversational no man's land where I am at a complete loss. I don't know where to begin or end with a thirteen-year-old. I remember what a painful period of life that can be, but I am not wise enough to bridge my way back, with the perspective I now have.

The doctor's wife served cocktails to put us all a little more at ease. Even Peter was permitted a tiny cocktail in order not to exclude him completely from sharing the experience with his lady love. At dinner we thawed out. Peter began with a timid question, followed by the flood. He asked me everything and anything, including questions that my best friends wouldn't have the nerve to ask. The doctor didn't

come to my rescue. I think he was enjoying it, but his wife did remonstrate, mildly and ineffectually, with the boy.

Then Peter launched into a lecture on the subject of Peter, his past, present, and future. The description was an offering at my feet. He outlined all the grand things he would achieve, with the tacit understanding that I might share in the fruits of these achievements. I believe he was divided between medical research and interplanetary travel as a career.

After dinner I suggested that, since the doctor and his wife had seen the play, perhaps they would let Peter see it tonight. They agreed. Then Peter and I made our own conspiracy, refused the doctor's offer of a ride to the theater, and called a cab.

On the way he sat next to me, prim, sedate, and perfectly proper. "Well, Peter," I said, "it was a pleasant evening. Now I suppose it will be a long time before we see each other again."

He turned his sad brown eyes to me. "Miss Gabor," he said, "how old are you?"

I told him. He received the information in silence. Then he murmured, "That is very old."

He must have thought I was ready for my pension. "It is, Peter," I agreed, "and when you are out of school, curing cancer or flying to Mars, I will be still older."

Peter heaved a fat sigh. He had discovered a chink in the armor of his imagination.

After the performance I took him home in a cab and

kissed him on the cheek as he left. He looked at me with such an expression that I melted, thinking back to Pista and to little Eva on her ice skates in Budapest.

I waved good-by. Peter went into the house, put away the albums, forgot my pictures, and played baseball once again.

I hope he gets to Mars.

Here We Go Again!

TRY EVERYTHING once. When I have nothing else to get by on, I get by on nerve.

Not long ago a lecture agent, one of whose clients is Mrs. Roosevelt, suggested that I become a lecturer. When I asked, "On what subject?" and he couldn't supply the answer, my career as a lecturer ended. I did, however, investigate the lecture business by going to New Brunswick, where a friend who is a chemical engineer was to deliver an impassioned address on sewage disposal to a Rutgers audience. I operated the lantern-slide machine while my friend told people how to lose garbage.

Having acted as a lecturer's assistant, I went one step further and actually delivered a lecture on the theater before a rough, tough, heartless ANTA audience in New York City—proof positive that fools rush in.

I have been an actress, an interviewer, and an emcee.

I have hung upside down by my heels and choked Linda Christian from that position to oblige the photographer, Philippe Halsman.

I have been approached by a recording company with the criminal proposition that I sing and record the results. Since I am a frustrated thrush I said I was willing to try if they would lend me a maestro to give me a few lessons. The maestro came, gave me three lessons, and turned me loose. And I have recorded an album. *Caveat emptor*.

I know a bellhop named Mike in Memphis who can get you a wonderful salami sandwich at two in the morning. I know a restaurant in the French Quarter of New Orleans where eating is distilled joy. I know a man in Houston, Texas, who will tell not your future but your past, for one dollar, and do it so entertainingly that you don't mind his being absolutely wrong about everything.

At the end of last winter I was offered a job as chief cook and bottle washer on a two-hour disc jockey show. My saddle was to be in the Belmont Plaza Hotel, where I was to trouble the midnight air and the early morning hours with a hundred and twenty minutes of gab. Usually, when I am offered work, I put up a show of resistance and then say yes. This time, however, my hesitation was genuine. I wasn't sure I could talk for two hours, and I dreaded putting my English on exhibition for that long a period. You need a vocabulary for that sort of thing.

Yet the unmentionable or money part of the offer

was attractive, and I finally gave a scared "yes."

That was the wrong answer.

The show was a fine combination of hard work and slow torture. I was a good sleeper until the night I first spoke as a disc jockey from the Glass Hat in the Belmont Plaza.

A few days before my disc jockey show was to open with a big bang or a small poof, I appeared on TV with Walter Winchell, a local writer of whom you may have heard. Being my usual shy self, I managed to get in a few words edgewise, and some blunt end forward, concerning my forthcoming Belmont Plaza stint. Then I invited Winchell to appear with me in the Glass Hat.

Later he generously said that my opening show had such a long list of guests that I wouldn't need him, but he would come the second night. He did. He appeared a few minutes after I was on the air, and stayed the entire evening, doing most of my work for me and carrying on a historic interview with Dagmar—an interview in which she was heard and not seen. During that period I wasn't even heard.

The disc jockey business has its moments. I interviewed many people from the theater and entertainment worlds, but I was more fascinated with guests who came from worlds I never knew. I was always interviewing people concerning whose life and work I was chock-full of ignorance.

One night a handsome young fellow named Ewell Blackwell sat next to me before the microphones and waited for me to talk. Ewell Blackwell was then a

pitcher for the New York Yankees. I knew that the Yankees were a baseball team, but there my knowledge ended. When Mr. Blackwell appeared on my program I had only the vaguest idea of the functions of a pitcher, but I plunged in with all sorts of questions. I wanted to know how many home runs he had hit and why he hadn't hit more. And did he like to strike out people? Did he throw the ball fast? Is it fair to throw it fast? Is it hard to hit a batter with the ball? Does it hurt? I recall being under the impression that a pitcher played ball every day, just like the other fellows on the team, and it seemed a shame to me that a nice boy like Ewell Blackwell should have sat on the bench that afternoon while the other boys were romping in the sun.

Mr. Blackwell was very kind and patient, and he never lifted a hand to me.

Mickey Mantle was there that night, a shy, good-looking, rather boyish youngster. With him were the bat and ball with which he had recently hit a 560-foot home run. The bat and ball were on their way to the Hall of Fame. I should think they would put Mickey in the Hall of Fame and leave the bat and ball where they belong.

Mickey let me heft the bat, which was not as heavy as I thought it would be, and Ewell Blackwell offered to pitch to me in the precincts of the Belmont Plaza's Glass Hat. I thought of the 560-foot home run, and said I'd better not. After all, if I connected and put a little wood to the ball (how's that for baseball talk?),

I was liable to smash a few mirrors. Mr. Blackwell told me to swing away and not worry about the consequences.

I have since inquired about the pitch Ewell Blackwell threw me. Some said it was high, fast, and hard. Others said he used a slider. Still others insist it was a knuckler, a dipsy-doodle, or a sharp breaking curve with just a little taken off it. (I studied the sports page this morning.) I'm not sure which of these it was, although I can report that Ewell Blackwell threw it from a distance of five feet with a soft underhand motion.

I'll have you know I hit the ball first swing. It dribbled off the bat and smote my dog, Muffet, who yawned, got up, moved two feet, and lay down again. It was scored as a hit.

My batting average is 1.000, where it will remain for all time.

In retrospect I had no right to be pleasant to ball-players. Nothing provides stiffer competition for television actors and actresses than baseball. I still recall a show in Providence, Rhode Island, in which I was to appear. I had directed this show myself and was rather proud of it. But it never got on—because the televised ball game didn't finish on time. So long live Ewell Blackwell and Mickey Mantle—and down with baseball!

During my first weeks on the program I broke in from time to time to say, "Now I have to break the station." I was under the impression that I was announcing a station break. That's the sort of thing that

earned me the title of "Miss Malaprop of 1953." I still hold this title unchallenged.

My program, which ran from midnight to 2 A.M., also inspired a fan club made up of close friends and relatives. This thriving organization was known as the "Bags under the Eyes Club for Eva Gabor." In some cases where applicants were too poor to afford insomnia, we accepted migraine headaches as a substitute.

Another guest whom I remember is Max, the proprietor of the Stage Delicatessen, one of New York's regular theater hangouts. Max was a helpful talker, beginning with his long story of the actor who ate in the delicatessen for two years without paying and who had apologized for coming in the night before without his tie.

Max brought me a delightful gift—a six-foot salami. Did you ever go home at two-thirty in the morning with a six-foot salami? It isn't easy. There's something about carrying a six-foot salami that attracts attention. I managed to get it into a taxi by bending it through the door, and when I arrived home the cab driver watched me solemnly as I got out, shook his head, and said, "What? No rye bread?"

It all sounds like fun, but I was a mighty happy girl when the show ended and I learned how to sleep once more.

The only thing I haven't done theater-wise is dance, and I'm about to learn.

Me and My Glamour

REPORTER: Miss Gabor, is it true that when you get up every morning you rush from bed to the bubble bath, where you lounge for five hours, munching chocolates, pouting, and reading paperback French romances?

MISS GABOR: Of course not. Where did you get such an idea?

REPORTER: I took it for granted.

I'll never understand why anyone should take it for granted that I spend hours in the bubble bath when I get up every morning. I don't even understand why anyone should take it for granted that I get up every morning. And I can't figure out the alleged connection between glamour and bubbles. But anyone who has a reputation for glamour must meet such questions face to face without flinching. She must even pretend that the answers are important.

Since I am "glamorous," certain completely untypi-

cal things are supposed to be typical of me. I recall having invited some friends and acquaintances to my apartment for an informal evening. We sat around chatting for a few hours. Then I suggested that hungry guests should raid the icebox. A few people took me up on this and ran for the kitchen with their incisors exposed. Then they came back, shook their heads at the vagaries of this addlebrained glamour girl, and announced that the refrigerator was full of orchids and salami—and nothing else.

This was immediately assumed to represent the spirit of the true Eva. Ah, Eva! She is satisfied with a crust of black bread as long as she can surround herself with beauty! She needs no food as long as she can look on orchids!

Now I must admit that it is sort of cute to fill a refrigerator with orchids and salami. It's also true that I like to surround myself with beauty—as who doesn't?—but dinner comes first. I hate Chopin on an empty stomach. I am fed neither intravenously nor sparingly. That my refrigerator was filled with orchids and salami (symbols, I suppose, of the eternal struggle between illusion and reality) was pure accident.

That morning an old friend had sent me an armload of orchids, a frankly extravagant gesture which he lived to regret. Since I am not at home during the day my domestic worker put them in the refrigerator, removing all the food except the salami to make room. She took home the perishable foods, put them in her own refrigerator, and returned them the next day.

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Why should I confess that among the food removed were a pound and a half of hamburger, two jars of sour milk, a can of peaches, a roast pork loin, half a broiled chicken, a quart of tomato juice, a slab of Wisconsin cheese, and a demijohn of borscht? It would spoil the story. It's not as literary as orchids and salami.

Let me give you my own thoughts on my life as a slab of cheesecake. Here I am, blonde and glamorous, but I ask myself, glamorous to whom? Because I am glamorous, and not because of anything I have done, some women distrust me. Their attitude is one of hostility or, at best, benevolent neutrality. They feel about me the way men feel about Errol Flynn.

How much of my glamour is simply the fashion of the day? Consider Lillian Russell and Maude Adams, women who once possessed the glamour that drove men mad (quote, unquote). Today their pictures could illustrate an upholsterer's manual.

Men have many different concepts of glamour. As fast as you fulfill the conditions of one they invent another. You may be stretching your torso, massaging your face, sleeping special beauty sleeps, only to discover that all you need is a long cigarette holder. Some men will swoon over a woman wearing hip boots and carrying a sack of dead mackerel, provided she smokes a cigarette in a long holder. This makes men happy and keeps them out of the poolroom. Such men don't really like women but they are crazy about cigarette holders. The whole thing is much too psychological for me

Men, by their pernicious influence, can set the styles in glamour only because the nation now has about two million more females than males. Male and not enough female created He them. The males have won a smashing statistical victory which they attribute to their personal charm, forgetting that we women have many storms and not enough ports. If I were a man I wouldn't get so heady over a trial balance I didn't even cast.

It is worth noting that in Alaska, where the men far outnumber the women, the men take the bubble baths.

I'm sure that some of the current emphasis on glamour may be traced to that statistical difference between male and female. Love has become a buyer's market with no price control and some furious competition. Glamour is supposed to give a woman an edge.

And it does.

But life as a full-time Cinderella is not all gin and skittles, or goulash and tokay. The midnight bell tolls for Cinderella, and the glass slippers often give her blisters.

Glamour has its price in dollars and cents. I have to work at it, and the expenses of glamour are the operating expenses of my career. I have to pay through the teeth for photos and clothes and beauty parlors and all the other accessories of glamour. Of themselves these things do not give me pleasure to the extent that I must indulge them. They only give me debts. I must do more of this buying and primping than any normal woman should have to do.

Being a portrait is often no fun. A portrait can't relax, put its feet on the table, and eat a hot dog with the mustard dripping from one end as it should. I'm really sorry for women who take glamour too seriously, too intently, and live the life of a portrait. It can never be a true portrait. In any human relationship the time must come when someone for whom you care deeply catches you with curlers in your hair or watches you stumble blindly about the room, trying to locate that first cup of coffee without which you refuse to do anything but bark like a dog. Give anyone the illusion that the perfect hair-do, the ideal dress, the touch-me-not perfection, are the permanent state of affairs, and you are kidding two people of whom one is you. And it's exhausting in the bargain.

Mind you, I'm not trying to beg off. I worry about the glamour business. It's my bread and butter. At times it's my caviar and pheasant. It's part of my career whether I like it or not. Sometimes I don't like it. Other times I love it. But I actually do relatively little about it. I wash with soap and water—nothing else. I don't attack my face with creams, oils, ointments, hormones, and oversexed vitamins. I don't sleep with contraptions on my face. I leave mud baths to bacon-bearing animals, and I never feel naked if my toenails aren't painted vermilion.

Yet when I go out of an evening, either in line of duty or socially, I always take great care to look my very best. I do nothing special, everything carefully. My routine includes weighty conflicts over the right dress,

the right jewelry. I ask myself more questions than Hamlet as I ponder over which pair of shoes to wear.

Then, after I come as close as I can to being as attractive as I can, I try to beat myself at this game. It's a funny thing, but after all the work I often find myself having to conquer the very glamour I've achieved. I can explain myself best by recounting an experience I've had many times—and will continue to have.

I am in a play. The curtain rises. I stand in the wings, an actress retained for her alleged glamour, and await my cue. I feel just right. I believe I look just right. I've lived up to my part of the bargain. Then I hear my cue and walk on stage.

At that very moment I can sense something in the audience. They are putting me on trial. In row after row sit men and women who are saying to themselves, "All right, glamour girl, let's see what you can do besides look pretty." And I've got to beat my glamour down. I've got to make the audience forget it, make them accept me as an actress, make them agree that I would be an actress if I looked like a mud pie. I can tell when I succeed and when I don't.

This isn't by way of complaint because this very personal sense of victory gives me much of the pleasure I find in the theater. Theatrical glory consists in my knowing that when the first-act curtain has fallen the audience has forgotten me as a glamorous blonde and accepted me as an actress. After all, I hope to be an actress much longer than I hope to be glamorous. I'll have to be. Marlene Dietrichs don't grow on trees. If

they did, every man in America would plant an orchard, industry would go to pot, and where would we be?

Life for me has not always been, and is not now, a never-never land. Blonde as I am, I do know the shape of a broom and the function of the wet end of a mop. I have used them both, spiritlessly to be sure, but competently enough. I won't pretend that I love them and I am deeply suspicious of any woman who says she does. I am not a homebody who enjoys sinking her knees into the linoleum and swabbing the deck. If any woman wants to romanticize the mop, I pity her. I prefer a tennis racket. If you tell me it won't sweep the floor, I'd like to see you return service with a broom.

Women for whom mop wielding, broom swinging, and the grind of making a living are necessary evils may read what I have to say about glamour and think: "What happens to this glamour when you have a dust-cloth on your head and your Ecstatic Red fingernails are deep in a suds bucket? What happens to glamour on the Lexington Avenue subway headed for Brooklyn at 5:15 P.M. on Blue Monday?"

Maybe we part company, but I think glamour survives all these things. I believe that pride, more than any other mental or physical attribute, makes people attractive, the kind of pride that consists in liking yourself, putting a premium on your own value. Given that, you can get away with murder.

I've walked along Fifth Avenue and found myself admiring men, well dressed and self-confident, who

wandered by. But I have reacted just as strongly to a workman in the street, his face streaked as he leaned on a pneumatic drill, wiping his forehead with his forearm. I have detected in him the same pride in his biceps that another man may have in his Brooks Brothers suit. Sometimes I think that Brooks Brothers ought to sell biceps. A man can't even get a pair of shoulders there.

Pride brings you closer to glamour than beauty. Have you ever seen a statue of the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti? Pick out any feature and it is all wrong. And her make-up! Well, my dear, it's simply impossible! But Nefertiti has managed to remain glamorous for many thousands of years. Even Marlene can't match that, but we will have to give her time.

Look at the statue and you begin to understand this phenomenon. Nefertiti is saying, "I am Queen." She is saying, "You can depose me, you can deport me, you can sue me, you can make me listen to hillbilly music, but come hell or high water, I'm Queen."

And she is, too.

The nice thing about beauty is that it makes pride come more easily, but a careless and indifferent beauty is no match for a proud plain sister. It didn't bother Chopin when George Sand smoked cigars. But don't run down for a box of stogies. Chopin is dead.

I don't want to be proud of myself only as a glamour girl. Publicity can do that for me. I want to be proud of myself as an actress. I guess I'll have to do that by myself.

Grandfather's Return

A FEW NIGHTS ago, as I lay dreaming, Grandpapa returned to me in a fiery cloud. "Eva, my child," he said, "I see you have fulfilled the Budapestian Prophecy and written a book."

"Yes, Grandpapa," I replied.

"And you called it *Orchids and Salami*, just as I said you would."

"Better than that, Grandpapa. I even found a reason for calling it *Orchids and Salami*."

Grandpapa smiled radiantly and a horde of angels burst out singing. "My child," continued Grandpapa, stroking my head, "I can see you now, bound in the finest calfskin, next to Shakespeare on the shelf."

"My book next to Shakespeare! But, Grandpapa!" I laughed.

"I didn't say anything about your book," explained Gramps. "I was talking about you." Strangely enough, he had a copy of *Orchids and Salami* in his hand al-

though it had not yet been published. "Tell me," he continued, "when are you going to write your next book?"

I was stunned. "My next?" I asked incredulously. "I have no intention of ever writing another book."

"Good!" cried Grandpapa, slapping his knee with more enthusiasm than I thought decent. "Now back to work with you, and as you go back, I want you to remember one lesson."

"And what is that, Grandpapa?" I asked.

He replied in the words of an old Hungarian proverb: "Don't let any grass grow over your head."

Let us all follow Grandpapa's advice.

